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Mr. *CHAMBRES*'s

SERMON

At St. PAUL's,

MAY the 29th, 1733.

BARBER Mayor.

Tueſday *the Nineteenth Day of* June, 1733, *and in the Seventh Year of the Reign of King* GEORGE *the Second, of* Great-Britain, &c.

IT is ordered, that the Thanks of this Court be given to the Reverend Mr. *Chambres*, for his Sermon preached before this Court, and the Liveries of the ſeveral Companies of this City, at the Cathedral-Church of St. *Paul*, on *Tueſday* the Twenty-ninth Day of *May* laſt, being the Anniverſary-Day of Thankſgiving for the Reſtoration of the Royal Family and Government; and that he be deſired to print the ſame.

JACKSON.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Cathedral-Church of St. PAUL,

Before the Right Honourable

The LORD-MAYOR,

The ALDERMEN, and CITIZENS of *LONDON*,

On TUESDAY the 29th of *May*, 1733.

Being the Anniverſary-Day of Thankſgiving for the RESTORATION.

By CHARLES CHAMBRES, M. A.
Vicar of *Dartford* in *Kent*.

LONDON:
Printed for THO. ASTLEY, at the *Roſe*, over againſt the North-Door of St. *Paul's*. 1733.

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TO THE

Right HONOURABLE

JOHN BARBER, Esq;

LORD-MAYOR of *London.*

My LORD,

THE Honour you did me (tho' personally unknown to you) in sending me your Invitation to Preach before You on this Great Occasion, made my Compliance a necessary Debt to your Civility. But the greater Honour since done me in the *Court of Aldermen's* so publick Approbation of my Sermon, and in their Desire to Print it, leaves me no Liberty to wave their Requeſt without an Affront to their Judgment and Candour: And I had rather submit to the just Censure of the Critick, and the various Opinions of the Readers, than to bear the Suspicion of

of not having a juſt Eſteem for your LORDSHIP's favourable Sentiment of me, or a chearful Inclination to ſubmit to the Pleaſure of that Worſhipful Court.

THE great Eſteem I have for your LORDSHIP's publick Character, was my chief Motive to undertake this Office: And tho' I have made my mean Exerciſe therein publick, yet the World will excuſe me in a Deference that was due to the CHIEF MAGISTRACY of the Firſt, the Richeſt, and the beſt governed CITY in *Europe*.

YOUR LORDSHIP's clear Knowledge of your Great Authority and Truſt; your brave Reſolution to maintain the one, and your honeſt Endeavours to fulfil the other, together with your conſtant and natural Love for the CHURCH and State of *England*, which have ſo many, and the ſame Enemies to contend with: And eſpecially your Zeal for the Honour, Preſervation, and Proſperity of this Glorious CITY which you preſide in, with a Glory ſuitable to its own, and with a Judgment fitted to conduct its Affairs in the moſt intricate and delicate Circumſtances, have engaged to you the Reſpects and Acknowledgments of the whole Kingdom. And therefore I cannot but be well pleaſed with this publick Opportunity given me of profeſſing mine; who am,

Your LORDSHIP's *moſt Obedient*
and Obliged Servant,

CHARLES CHAMBRES.

1 SAM. xij. 22, 23, 24— *But I will teach you the good and the right way;*
Only fear the LORD, *and ſerve him in truth, with all your heart; for conſider how great things he hath done for you.*
But if ye ſhall ſtill do wickedly, ye ſhall be conſumed, both ye and your king

GOOD is the great Object of the Human Will, in the real or imagined Poſſeſſion of which it can only *reſt*. And TRUTH is the Great Object of the Human Underſtanding, in the Apprehenſion of which it only can acquieſce. And in Proportion as theſe two diſtinct Faculties of the Human Mind diſcover and poſſeſs *real* Truth and Good, they advance the Happineſs and Dignity of Human Nature.

THE Prophet, in the Text, inſpired by the Fountain and original Author of Truth and Good, tells the *Jewiſh* Nation the *certain* Way to both. And beforehand to fix their better Attention to his *divine* Information, performed a *real* Miracle before their Eyes; then ſays, *I will teach you the* GOOD *and the* RIGHT *Way*. And this Good and Right Way he deſcribes in a very few, but comprehenſive Words, *viz.* ONLY *fear the Lord, and ſerve him in truth, with all your heart*. Words, which howſoever few, comprehend the whole of *Religion*, bringing it into a *Summary* View.

AND to engage his Hearers, by the moſt powerful Motives, to ſeek and to purſue Good and Truth this way, he exhorts them, Firſt, To recollect the Greatneſs and Variety of GOD's Beneficence towards them,

them, *for conſider how great things he hath done for you.* And, Secondly, To conſider the dangerous Conſequences of not complying with that *divine* Admonition, namely, that it would be the Ruin of their *private* and *publick* HAPPINESS: *But if ye ſhall ſtill do wickedly, ye ſhall be conſumed, both* YE *and your* KING.

IT is true, the Words were originally ſpoken to the Nation of the *Jews*, with a *primary* View to their religious Conduct. But when we conſider that *all the ſcripture* of the Prophets *was given by inſpiration of God* *, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs to all People called to Religion by the ſame Spirit of GOD, *that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good works*, we muſt needs acknowledge they have a *ſecondary* View to all *Chriſtians*, who were called to Religion by the Meſſiah of the *Jews*, JESUS CHRIST, the *eternal* and *incarnate* Son of GOD, through the *Eternal Spirit*, the SPIRIT of GOD the FATHER and GOD the SON. And this will juſtify my Application of them to *Chriſtians* in general, and this Chriſtian Audience in particular.

IN order therefore to recommend and enforce this divine Inſtruction and Admonition in a manner ſuitable to this Occaſion, I beg leave,

FIRST, To explain the Import of the Words, to point out this good and right Way, by ſhewing what is underſtood by *fearing the* LORD, *and ſerving him in truth, with all the heart.*

SECONDLY, To enforce the Duties here recommended by the ſame Motives mentioned by the Prophet, applied to our ſelves, namely,

FIRST, From the Recollection of the *Greatneſs* and *Variety* of GOD'S BENEFICENCE towards this

* 2 Tim. iij. 16.

Nation,

Nation, with a particular Reſpect to the Bleſſings of this Day, to commemorate which, in a moſt religious manner, we are now aſſembled.

SECONDLY, From the Conſideration of the dangerous Conſequences of our not complying with this *divine* Admonition, namely, that it threatens the Ruin of our *private* and *publick* Happineſs, in the Deſtruction both of Us and our KING.

LASTLY, I ſhall draw Two or Three ſuitable Inferences from the whole.

FIRST, I am to explain the Import of the Words, by ſhewing what is underſtood by fearing the LORD, and ſerving him in Truth, with all the Heart.

TO fear the LORD, in the Language of Holy Scripture, generally imports that true inward Senſe of the Divine Nature and Perfections that effectually prevails with us to the outward Exerciſes of all the Duties of inſtituted Religion; which Fear is therefore juſtly put, as it often is in Scripture, to ſignify all Religion, it being the very Life and Principle of it, without which all outward Profeſſions and Exerciſes of Religion ſignify nothing. This Fear is a compound Paſſion, or *Senſe* of the Mind, conſiſting of a diſtinct Perception and Admiration of God's inherent and communicative Perfections, accompanied *always* with a juſt Apprehenſion of his perfect Holineſs and Juſtice, creating in us a reaſonable Fear and Averſion to the Guilt and Puniſhment of Sin.

THIS Religious Fear is created in us, *partly* by every Man's Reflections, or *natural* Reaſoning, upon the viſible Things of this great World, and the greater Miracle, his own Being and Perfections of Body and Mind, by which is made manifeſt the Foundation of Religion, in a plain Diſcovery of thoſe inviſible Things of GOD, even his eternal Power and Godhead; and partly by reflecting impartially upon the Divine Credit and Import of the Holy Scripture, as a ſupplemental Revelation from GOD to us concerning Religion, wherein we are taught the Nature of GOD and Man, and the Duties

ariſing from them, in a more authentick manner, and enabled to perform them with more Alacrity, Strength, and Succeſs, through the Motives of the Goſpel, and the ſupernatural Grace exhibited to Believers in the Uſe of the Chriſtian Ordinances. So that it is plain, the original Religion given to Man was not ſo perfect as that given to him ſince by the written Inſpirations of GOD in the Scriptures; and therefore the Religion of Nature, as it is applied to Man, was not an abſolutely perfect Religion, as is pretended by our modern Deiſts: Becauſe judging from the Writings and Actions of the beſt Heathens before, or without the Scriptures, the beſt Samples of human Nature, it is a Demonſtration that Men became more knowing, more virtuous in themſelves, and more beneficent to others, and conſequently more perfect, and more happy Creatures, ſince their Knowledge of the Scriptures, than before. So that now the Fear of the LORD imports ſuch a lively and true Senſe of the Divine Nature and Will applied to Man, as may be learnt by the joint Aſſiſtance of Human Reaſon and Holy Scripture.

TO ſerve the LORD in conſequence of this inward Fear, is the outward Exerciſe of all the Duties underſtood to be preſcribed us by Right Reaſon, and the poſitive Inſtitutions of Revealed Religion, out of a Conſcience towards GOD, and a moral Senſe of Obedience due to all his Commandments, which muſt, in regard to his immutable and abſolute Perfections, whatever vain Men may think, be Holy, Juſt, and Good.

INDEED in this conceited Age, wherein intellectual Pride is ſo Aſſuming and Triumphant, we are told otherwiſe, that Religion conſiſts wholly in the Obſervation of meer moral Virtue, and that in the Way that every Man thinks to be ſuch; and that inſtituted Religion is an Impoſition upon Mankind, and every Man is at Liberty to caſt away the pretended Duties of it with Reſentment and Deriſion.

But for a ſhort Confutation of theſe vain meer Moraliſts, may we ask them what they themſelves mean by meer moral Virtue, the Diſtinction they are ſo fond of? Do they mean that Order of Thought and Action which ariſes from the conſtituted Nature of Things, as conſtituted by the infinite Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Holineſs of God, or what together they call the immutable Righteouſneſs of God? If they do, is not this immutable Righteouſneſs of God that ſteady and harmonious Regard of the divine Will to all the Perfections of the Deity, by the Aſſemblage of which into one unerring, all-knowing, and all-gracious, general Perfection, he reſolves and does every thing, and without which he can do nothing? Is not this therefore that Righteouſneſs, or univerſal Rectitude, by which he conſtituted the Nature and Relation of Things from which Conſtitution all moral Virtue ariſes? And is not this that Righteouſneſs, or unerring Rectitude, by which he inſtituted the poſitive Duties of Revealed Religion, as effectual Helps to the Perfections of moral Virtue, and as Specimens to prove our moral Obedience by? If ſo, is it not ſufficient, in order to juſtify our moral Obedience to theſe poſitive Inſtitutions, that they have all the moral Evidence poſſible for their divine Appointment, and ſo lay all poſſible moral Obligation upon us to obey them, without the Conceit and Arrogance of aſſuming to ourſelves a Power of diſtinguiſhing which Actions are fitteſt to be done, thoſe conſtituted at the Creation of Man, or thoſe conſtituted at his Redemption, which opens more Glories and divine Priviledges to Man than his Creation, or taking upon us to judge which are better of God's Determinations and Actions, this or that; eſpecially conſidering that this Limitation of Duty to meer moral Virtue, in the Senſe they contend for it, ſaps the Foundation of moral Virtue in general, and prevents the Eſtabliſhment of any ſtated Religion in the World in particular, and ſo cuts off all the outward Exerciſe of Religion in the World.

A SINCERE Moraliſt therefore upon his own Principle, his Love, and entire Attachment to moral Virtue, whether he conſiders poſitive Inſtitutions, as having the ſame moral Foundation, in the Nature of GOD and Man, or as Helps ordained by GOD to teſtify and compleat our moral Obedience, he muſt obſerve them as perfective of that moral Virtue he adores, and aſpires to be perfect in: And therefore muſt heartily embrace Revealed Religion upon the moral Evidence on which its divine Authority ſtands; muſt firmly believe, meekly hear, diligently read, and conſcientiouſly obey the Scriptures; muſt join in the publick Worſhip of GOD in ſome uniform and ſcriptural manner; muſt devoutly uſe GOD's holy Sacraments, and rely upon the Power and Truth of GOD for their ſanctifying and ſaving Efficacy; muſt ſanctify the Sabbath, to keep it holy; muſt obey GOD in the outward Adminiſtration of the viſible Church by ſuch Perſons whom GOD hath ſpecially called and appointed for that Purpoſe, *obeying them that have the rule over them, who watch for their ſouls.* All theſe poſitive Inſtitutions of Religion are to be complied with for moral Reaſons, as appointed by GOD, and as known by Experience to enlarge the Bounds, and perfect the Meaſure of moral Virtue. And therefore, in ſhort, the true Import of fearing and ſerving the LORD is expreſſed, in our excellent Church-Catechiſm, under our Duty towards GOD, which we learnt whilſt we were Children, which is our Duty now we are Men, and will be ſo whilſt we have a Being, *viz.* TO BELIEVE IN HIM, TO FEAR HIM, AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL OUR HEART, WITH ALL OUR MIND, WITH ALL OUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH; TO WORSHIP HIM, TO GIVE HIM THANKS, TO PUT OUR WHOLE TRUST IN HIM, TO CALL UPON HIM, TO HONOUR HIS HOLY NAME, AND HIS WORD, AND TO SERVE HIM TRULY ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE.

THIS is the Good and the Right Way recommended by the Prophet, by divine Authority, in the Text, couched

ed under the general Inſtruction of fearing the LORD, and ſerving him in Truth, and with all the Heart. I proceed then,

SECONDLY, To enforce the Duties here recommended by the ſame Motives mentioned by the Prophet, applied to ourſelves.

FIRST, From a Recollection of the Greatneſs and Variety of GOD's Beneficence towards this NATION. *For conſider how great things he hath done for you.*

TO recount all the Inſtances of GOD's publick Favours to this Land, whereby, under his Providence, we have been conducted to the Knowledge and Poſſeſſion of Truth and Good, is impoſſible at this Time. I ſhall therefore only remind you of ſome of the principal and moſt general Bleſſings vouchſafed by GOD to our Anceſtors and ourſelves: Such as in reſpect to Truth, converting this Nation to the Chriſtian Religion very betimes, and, as is probable, by one of the firſt and greateſt of the Chriſtian Apoſtles, St. *Paul*, who by a ſpecial Commiſſion, ſealed by the Miracle of his Converſion, was ſent by the *Gentiles* (for ye know that ye were *Gentiles*, carried away by dumb Idols, even as ye were led) *to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and inheritance among them that are ſanctified by faith that is in Chriſt.* Bleſſings of the higheſt Importance to Mankind, and which our Anceſtors, by their own early Converſion, had an Opportunity betimes of converting their Poſterity, and teaching them thoſe primitive Doctrines of Chriſt which they received from his own Apoſtle, that they might teach their Children the ſame; thereby ſucking Chriſtianity from the Fountain-Head before the Streams were polluted; in conſequence of which the pure Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, under the original Government of Epiſcopacy, was found in the moſt Weſtern Part of this Iſland, when St. *Auguſtine* was ſent hither to plant Chriſtianity among the Barbarians, who invaded and conquered the *Britains*; when

when the Ancient Inhabitants, who were forced to retire from their cruel Perſecutions into *Wales*, there retained the Chriſtian Religion in the primitive Purity, without any Dependance upon, or Corruptions from the uſurping Powers and Innovations of the Church of *Rome*. For which early Inſtruction in the Will, and ſaving Health of GOD, our conſtant Remembrance and devout Gratitude is due, and eſpecially our Obligation is the ſtronger to *fear and ſerve the Lord in Truth, and with all the Heart.*

As our Obligation ſtill riſes higher from a Senſe of our being reſtored to this primitive Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, when afterwards Popery had found its way to deceive and enſlave our Anceſtors, partly through the Unwarineſs and Indolence of Chriſtians here, and partly through the artful and beguiling Inſinuations of Jeſuitical Deceivers, who found Means to reduce them to the ſuperſtitious Idolatries and Hereſies of the Church of *Rome*, and thereby involv'd them almoſt in the ſame Ignorance, and more Guilt than belong'd to them in their *Pagan* State; when they eſpouſed *Pagan* Errors, and practiſed *Pagan* Abominations, as the Church of *Rome* at preſent does, under the clear Light and open Profeſſion of the Goſpel. From which degenerate State of Chriſtianity they were happily delivered at the PROTESTANT REFORMATION; which Reformation, conſidering the Power and Influence of the *Roman* Church here at that Time, and the ſtrong and general Prejudice of Education in its Favour, and that little Accident that gave the firſt Occaſion to it, on the one Hand, and the abundant Grace and divine Strength then exhibited in the publick Diſputes, and perſuaſive Writings, and conſtant patient Sufferings of our firſt pious Reformers, can only be imputed to an extraordinary Influence of the purifying Spirit and interpoſing Hand of GOD, for which our Forgetfulneſs would be a Sin of high Guilt, and our unreformed Lives the greateſt Reproach to the Reformation of our Faith, ſeeing that tho' through the Mercy

of

of GOD we were reſtor'd to the Truth of our Religion, we are not yet reſtor'd to the Power of it.

BUT more eſpecially does our Obligation ariſe to ſerve and fear the LORD in Truth, in Conſideration of the Bleſſings, in reſpect to Religion, which we this Day commemorate in our Deliverance from the worſt Pollutions and Perſecution of this Church in the grand Rebellion: When ſome of our Companions and Partners in the bleſſed Privileges of the Reformation treacherouſly join'd with a Fanatical Crew of Enthuſiaſts and Independants, in an open and violent Aſſault upon this moſt Reformed Church, to the utter Ruin of it; and at a Time when it was confeſſed by foreign Proteſtants of all Denominations, to be the Bulwark of the Proteſtant Cauſe: When under the moſt hypocritical Pretence of a farther Reformation in it, they ſeized the publick Adminiſtration of it, changing ſome, and uſurping others of its original divine Powers; aboliſhing ſome, and prophaning others of its Scripture Ordinances, polluting its Divine Worſhip, perſecuting its faithful Miniſters with a malicious Cruelty, and dividing the Portion allotted them by the Laws of GOD and Man, for a Prey to themſelves. Thus changing the whole admirable Face of this Church, faſhion'd in the Beauty of Holineſs, into an odious Monſter, repreſenting Schiſm, Hereſy, Enthuſiaſm, Prophaneſs, Rebellion and Sacrilege. During which Time the pure Religion that was undefiled before GOD, and ſhone by the glorious Light of the Goſpel, was almoſt twelve Years under a Fanatical Eclipſe. But this Day brings to Remembrance, when ſhe emerged again in her Primitive Glory; when the real Defender of her Faith was happily reſtor'd to his Juſt Right, and his Inclination accompanied with an Ability, and an immediate Endeavour to aſſert and reſtore all her Rights, and to defend her againſt all her Enemies, foreign and domeſtick, for which our moſt joyful and dutiful Acknowledgements and Obedience will be always due to GOD.

ESPECIALLY

ESPECIALLY when we conſider this Bleſſing heightened to our Anceſtors and ourſelves, in the Deliverance of our two famous Univerſities on the ſame Day (that Day of general Goal-delivery of Truth and Juſtice) from the Fetters laid on their Hands and Mouths by the implacable Enemies of both; and which, like thoſe on the Hands of St. *Peter*, fell off of their own Accord, when their Natural, Rightful, and long deſir'd Sovereign, as an Angel of GOD, open'd their Priſon-Doors, and ſet them at Liberty to reſume their ſucceſsful Searches after all uſeful and beneficial Learning, under the utmoſt Encouragement from the Royal Favour: And particularly to reſume and to maintain their ancient Arguments for Loyalty and Primitive Chriſtianity, which, under the Conduct of GOD's Providence, were the perſuaſive Cauſe of the REFORMATION, and made theſe two Univerſities the Common Mother which by a *joint Labour* gave Birth to the Reformed Church of *England*; and theſe were the two ſweet Breaſts from which ſhe originally ſucked the ſincere Milk of GOD's Word with which ſhe now feeds her Children.

THESE are ſome of the *great Things* in reſpect of Truth and the right Way, which GOD hath done for this Nation in theſe things greatly bleſſed of the LORD. But leſt theſe ſhould be thought Bleſſings only to the Church, let us paſs on to conſider thoſe which the State received on this joyful Day. And in remembring theſe, the Members of the Church have an equal Joy and Privilege, as the State equally partakes in the Deliverances of the Church: For the Church and State, which are by Law eſtabliſh'd, are like undivided Twins which live and die together; and therefore they have a perfect and moſt natural Sympathy in the Proſperity and Adverſity of one another. This is that State which gave *legal* Birth and Nouriſhment to this Church, and defends it by the temporal Sword. And this is that Church which gave ſpiritual Birth and Nouriſhment to the State, and defends it by the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of GOD, from all ſpiritual Invaders,

Invaders, and therefore they ever mourn and rejoice together; when one is alarmed with any approaching Evil, the other is in Fear, and looks about to ward it off; and when one is crowned with any kind of publick Succeſs, the other is crowned with Joy: and it is a Truth acknowledged from long and conſtant Experience, that the beſt Members of the Church are the beſt Subjects of the State, and the beſt Patriots of the State are the beſt Friends of the Church.

Let us then caſt a joyful Eye upon the great Deliverance of the State from the Miſeries of the Great Rebellion; and *that our joy may be full*, let us reflect a little upon the Excellency of our Civil Conſtitution, which was this Day recovered from Anarchy and Confuſion.

And here, if any Civil Government is founded in real Truth, or poſſeſſed of real Good, this is ſo; ſince none is conducted more for the Good of the Governors, and the Governed, and the Glory of God than this, when the Laws of our Conſtitution take their free and natural Courſe: for here is a wiſe, and moſt deſirable Balance aſcertained and ſettled by Law between Power and Liberty, in a juſt Limitation of the Prerogative of the Crown, and the Priviledges of the People. A Balance deſirable in all Governments, but enjoyed only in ours. For as Princes are but Men, and Subjects have natural Rights flowing from the original Deſign of Government, and as Princes have natural ſovereign Rights inherent in Sovereignty, and Subjects are liable to Diſorder, ſo both ſhould be under ſome legal Reſtraints beſides the Reſtraints of Conſcience and Religion, for their mutual Happineſs. Subjects are naturally under the Reſtraint of the Law of their rightful Sovereign; but tho' Princes cannot be controuled by their Subjects without inverting the Order of Things, yet gracious Princes may limit their own Prerogative for the Improvement of Government, and tranſmit it, ſo limited, to their Royal Heirs and Succeſſors as a Bleſſing. And when a legal Stipu-

lation is made by the Prince to the People for ſuch Limitation, the People have a legal Right to it. And by this means a Balance may be adjuſted, and a Mean ſettled between arbitrary Power and Slavery.

BUT as no meer human Inſtitutions can be perfect, ſo there can be no perfect Balance, in this reſpect, ſettled by human Counſels, though a Prince ſhould be never ſo well inclined to eſtabliſh it. And ſeeing that this Balance muſt in ſome meaſure be uneven, it ſeems moſt reaſonable that the Sovereign, who is the natural Subject of Power, ſhould always have the turning of the Scale; that an Exceeding of Prerogative ſhould be on the Side of the PRINCE, rather than Exceſs of Liberty on the Side of the *People*; not only that Subjects might occaſionally exerciſe the *Chriſtian Duties* of *Paſſive Obedience*, according to the Commands and Examples of our SAVIOUR and *his Apoſtles*, but alſo that SOVEREIGNS might not exerciſe *Civil* Government like *Machines*, by *Neceſſity*; but might have the ſame *moral* Liberty of GOVERNING *well* as the People have of OBEYING *well*, *for Conſcience ſake*; and that *both* might be capable of thoſe *divine* Rewards ordained by GOD for *good* Governors and *good* Subjects.

YET it is our peculiar Happineſs in our Conſtitution, that we have a more gracious and perfect Balance for the Limitation of Power and Liberty than any Government in the World. For as our MONARCHS, to ſupport the Dignity of their Character, have all the deſirable Enſigns of *Majeſty* veſted in their Royal Perſons and Prerogatives, the Regalia, the Guards, the Soldiery, the Diſpoſition of Honours, and civil Truſt, and the general Execution of the Laws; ſo the *People*, as a prudent Counterpoiſe, are inveſted by Law both with a concurring and diſſenting Authority in our Legiſlature, and with the ſole Grant of the Money to give the ſeveral Royal Prerogatives their due Force, Efficacy and Luſtre. Indeed, by the Laws of GOD and Nations a juſt

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Tribute is due to the Sovereign from every Subject for the Dignity and neceſſary Occaſions of Government; and he will ever find it, and a chearful Giver in every true Member of our Church, who are diſtinguiſhed for their Love of *Monarchy* and *Loyalty*. Yet conſidering that both Kings and Queens are ſubject to moral Corruption as well as all the reſt of Mankind, and ſo ſubject to *Ambition* and *Avarice*, and when under the Influence of theſe Paſſions, are ſtrongly tempted to exerciſe a lawleſs and oppreſſive Sway, and *indiſcreetly* to impoveriſh their Subjects by *unneceſſary* Taxes; it may be deemed one of the moſt valuable Priviledges of the Subjects, and one of the wiſeſt Proviſions for good Government, that our People, in their Parliamentary Capacity, have not only a *defenſive* Power in our Legiſlature, by which they may ſtop any offenſive Bill from proceeding into a Law, but have alſo an uncontеſted Right to deny all unneceſſary, and even inexpedient Supplies; eſpecially all ſuch as may be hurtful to our excellent Conſtitution.

Nor does our moſt Noble Houſe of Lords add any ſmall matter to the Beauty and Strength of this political Balance, by their Power to ſtop any Bill tending to weaken the Prerogative of the Crown, or diminiſh the Rights of the People. This Noble Houſe likewiſe ſerving to guard off a Democracy, the worſt in its ſelf of all Civil Governments, as the Obſervance of this Day will ever teach this Nation, and the moſt contrary to the Genius of the People, by keeping on foot that valuable Prerogative of the Crown, for creating its own Peers, to obviate any corrupt Harmony between the Lords and Commons, and to reward occaſionally thoſe moſt eminent and faithful Commoners who are moſt true to their King and Country.

Some perhaps may think the legiſlative Power of our Spiritual Lords the Biſhops of no neceſſary Service in our civil Conſtitution, and to be confounding

Things Spiritual with Things Temporal. But whoever will conſider, that our Clergy are natural Subjects as well as the Laity, and that they were ſubject to many, and now to almoſt all the Laws of the Laity; whoever alſo conſiders our Conſtitution to be of a mix'd Nature, partly religious and partly civil, the State having ſome juridical Share in the outward Adminiſtration of the Epiſcopal Church; and how far any ill, or miſtaken, Uſe of that Eccleſiaſtical Power by the State, may poſſibly affect the Church in her Spirituals, and obſtruct or diſcourage the free Profeſſion of true Chriſtianity among us: Whoever likewiſe conſiders all the Laity as *Chriſtians* as well as Subjects, whoſe religious Intereſt ſhould be conſulted as well as their temporal; and that for this they are under the common Care of our Biſhops with the Clergy: And, laſtly, whoſoever will conſider the preſumptive Capacity at leaſt of the Biſhops of our Church (who uſually are behind no Biſhops in the Chriſtian World for Learning, Piety, and Prudence) to adviſe in the State in all Matters of religious Government, can never think it an impolitick Reſpect to them, to call them into the Great Councils of the Nation, and to give them a Share with our Lay Rulers in the Civil Legiſlature, for the ſpiritual Defence and Advantage of the People. And as this has the Aſpect of being for the common Good of Laity and Clergy, and tends to preſerve true Religion among us, I hope the Right Reverend Fathers of the Church will never, as they were in the Great Rebellion, be voted uſeleſs in the State.

This is our preſent excellent Civil Conſtitution, and calls for the ſincere Affection and Zeal of every true *Engliſhman*, and good Subject, for its Preſervation.

And as to the Form of our Government taken together, it comes the neareſt of any other to that by which God governs the Univerſe and his Catholick Church; *viz.* a Trinity of Perſonages in an Unity of Majeſty. For as far as, keeping humble Diſtance, things human may

may be compared with Things divine, and Things finite with Things infinite, the *Three Eſtates of this Realm* moſt reſemble the THEOCRACY; each being *really* diſtinct from the other, and each *eſſential* to our Conſtitution, and all centring in a MONARCHY limited only by the divine Will, and regulated in its publick Adminiſtration by the divine Perfections; whilſt it profeſſes to govern us by the Obligations of the *Scriptures* and *Right Reaſon*, which jointly conſpire in the *Law* of UNIVERSAL RIGHTEOUSNESS, that *Law* which GOD is to *himſelf*, and which is the Rule of his *Univerſal Government* in the Great Kingdom of his PROVIDENCE. This being the true Nature of our Conſtitution, other Nations may well be provoked to *envy* us, as they do, and to ſay in their Hearts at leaſt, *This is a great nation; this is a wiſe and underſtanding people. Bleſſed are the people that are in ſuch a caſe; yea*, indeed, *bleſſed are we who* in this manner *have the* LORD *for our* GOD! which ſhould provoke us, in thoſe pathetick Words of King *David*, ſpoken of the peculiar City of GOD, to ſay one to another, in reſpect of this our *Jeruſalem*, *O pray for the peace of Jeruſalem, they ſhall proſper that love thee; peace be within thy walls, and plenteouſneſs within thy palaces, for my brethren and companions ſake I will wiſh thee now proſperity; yea, becauſe of the houſe of the* LORD *our* GOD, *I will ſeek to do thee good*; and moſt of all ſhould provoke us *to fear the* LORD, *and to ſerve him with all our heart*, conſidering *how great things he hath done for us*, in bleſſing us with ſuch a Conſtitution, in reſtoring it again to us, when it was *utterly loſt*, and in preſerving it to *this day*.

AND this we ſhall think ourſelves much more obliged, and be more heartily inclined to do, when we have reflected a little upon the miſerable State of our Anceſtors at the Great Rebellion.

It will not, I own, become the joyous Aſpect of this bleſſed Day to draw too great a Gloom upon it, by a full Conſideration of the manifold and piercing Troubles this Nation then ſuffered. I ſhall therefore draw only ſuch a Shade from them, as may render the Senſe of our Deliverance more pleaſing, without making it frightful: and yet in regard to the Prophet's ſecond Motive for fearing the Lord, and ſerving him, it ought to be made ſo frightful as to deter us from *ſtill doing wickedly, leſt we be conſumed, both we and our king.*

It is juſtly acknowledged by a ſolemn national penitential Confeſſion yearly, that the Sins of the Nation drew down that heavy Judgment upon it. And, indeed, whoever conſiders thoſe Times as handed down to us in Hiſtory, will find that a general Spirit of Irreligion then prevailed, which by degrees brought on that general Spirit of Rebellion which involved the whole Nation in Miſery: For when the firſt Seeds of it were ſcattered about by the Republican Faction, and appeared to ſpring into unreaſonable Clamours and Diſcontentment againſt the mildeſt and moſt religious King then in the World, they ſoon grew up into armed Men, and united into a formidable Army, which was not afraid to diſobey the King and his Laws, nor to inſult him, nor to ſpit in his Face, nor to ſtrip him of all his Kingly Power, nor to take away his Life in the open Street, and before his Palace-Gate. And having killed the King, they took Poſſeſſion, and with great Precipitation thus voted the Conſtitution down.

By voting Monarchy unneceſſary, burdenſome, and dangerous, then voting the Houſe of Lords uſeleſs, and dangerous; after they had firſt voted the Biſhops out of it, and incapable of being in the Commiſſion of Peace; then turning their own Voters out of the Houſe of Commons by Violence for diſobeying the Inclination and Orders of the Army. And as to our Church, they voted down the Pillars upon which it ſtood and flouriſhed, *i. e.* Epiſcopacy, our Common-Prayer, the Creed, the Lord's

Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. In this irreligious Condition, what could be expected, but that Anarchy, and Confusion, and Oppression which follow'd! for now their chief Leaders did not know what to do; sometimes they thought best to govern the People by that sanctified Remnant of the dispersed Parliament, sometimes by a more sanctified Council of State, and sometimes by the Saint General and his Officers, whose Banners were filled with Scripture. And these interchangeably ruled as the Spirit of Usurpation prevailed in them. But which Side soever seemed uppermost, it was plain enough that the Army ruled all. And what must be the Effects of a military Government every body may guess, and it will be hard to guess worse than it then happened.

For now who knew what Laws were in Force? and who dared to plead those that were? Private Subjects knew not to which to have recourse to redress their private Complaints against each other. For every body's Possessions were now grown precarious, and subject to Rapine by the Hands of one another. No Man's House was any longer his Castle, nor safe Retreat; no Man's Shop was his own Store-house, but House and Shop subject to be entered and searched by the Commission of irresistible Power, as if all were *Excise-men*, saving in this Comparison for the Legality of these *Civil* Officers Proceedings. The Enemies of many were those of their own House; for *Relations* met sometimes to encounter, seize, and destroy each other; and *Friends*, who in the general Hurry were casually enlisted into Armies of opposite Command, were either obliged to kill one the other, or by the inexorable martial Law to *die* for their *friendly* Disobedience. In this lamentable Case the Nation was involved, and seemed literally to suffer the Judgments threatened by God upon the sinful *Jews*, described by the Prophet in these Words; *The daughter of Zion bewailed herself, and spread out her hands, saying,*

woe

woe is me becauſe of the murderers! How long ſhall I ſee the ſtandard, and hear the ſound of the trumpet! O go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way, for the ſword of the enemy and fear is on every ſide! Then deſtruction upon deſtruction was cried; then did GOD *deliver the ſtrength of this city, and the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treaſures of the kings of Judah, into the hand of our enemies.* Then did this *Church* partake in the Fate of the *State*; for then did GOD *forſake his houſe, and left his heritage, and gave the dearly beloved of his ſoul into the hands of its enemies.* Then did GOD *vex us in his ſore diſpleaſure*; then did he *conſume both us and our king.*

To be delivered in this *Extremity* of Diſtreſs was a Bleſſing beyond the reach of *Hope.* To be delivered nevertheleſs in ſo compleat, in ſo ſudden, and in ſo peaceable a manner, when things changed as if they had never been diſplaced, and fell again of their own Accord from the *greateſt Confuſion* into their *old Order*, was moſt ſurprizing! This moſt certainly *was the Lord's doing, and it was ſo marvellous in the eyes* of our Anceſtors, *that they were like unto them that dream*; and when they could recover themſelves, *then was their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with joy:* And every body's Song then was, *The* LORD *hath done great things for us, yea, the* LORD *hath done great things for us* ALREADY, *whereof we rejoice.* And we their Poſterity who partake fully in the Bleſſing, have Reaſon to ſay, in reſpect of this Thankſgiving, upon that Occaſion, *This is the day which the* LORD *hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.* Which brings me,

LASTLY, To draw two or three Inferences, and ſo conclude.

FIRST, We may here infer the HOLINESS, JUSTICE, and MERCY of Providence. His Holineſs in appointing the Religious Conduct of a Nation, the Condition of his Favour towards it; his Juſtice in inflicting Puniſhment

niſhment upon it according to its Wickedneſs, and his Mercy in ſparing it for its Repentance. This has been his Conduct from the Beginning, and appears firſt in a more viſible and ſpecial manner in the Caſe of his own People, whilſt they were under the immediate Adminiſtration of a Theoracy; whoſe Covenant with them was, *If ye will obey my voice, and hearken unto my commandments to do them, I will be your* GOD, *and ye ſhall be my people, and I will love you and bleſs you.* But *curſed is every Man, i. e.* the whole Nation in its ſociate Capacity, *that obeyeth not the words of this covenant.* And to encourage their Repentance when their Wickedneſs had laid them under the Chaſtiſement of the LORD, he ſays, *If my people which are called by my name ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from all their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their ſin, and will heal their nation.* And as it was promiſed and threatned ſo it came to paſs, for when they were exemplary in their Obedience to GOD, they were made to *overcome their enemies*, to *poſſeſs houſes full of good things, and they did eat and were filled, and delighted themſelves in the divine goodneſs.* But when they generally revolted, GOD *gave them over to their enemies; and curſing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that they put their hand to, fell upon them. Nevertheleſs, in the time of their* penitential *trouble, when they cried he heard them, and according to his manifold mercies he gave them a Saviour who ſaved them from the hands of their enemies.* And this has been the conſtant Conduct of Providence towards all Nations; for as the *righteous* LORD *loveth righteouſneſs, ſo in every nation he that worketh righteouſneſs is accepted with him*, and as the general *kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governour among the nations*, ſo he *judges the folk righteouſly, and governs the nations upon earth.* And as Nations and all particular incorporated Societies of

Men end with this World, ſo they can be, and are only rewarded and puniſhed as ſuch in this World. And if GOD any time ſeems to ſuſpend his Judgment from a ſinful Nation, it is either that the *riches of his goodneſs in his forbearance and long ſuffering may bring them to repentance*, or that they are not yet ripe for a general Judgment; or elſe the good People which are amongſt them, who muſt needs be involved in a general Calamity, are the Cauſe of a farther ſuſpenſion, GOD ſometimes being willing to ſpare a City if there be *fifty* righteous, nay, peradventure there be *ten* found in it.

HENCE, Secondly, may be inferr'd, that it *equally* concerns all Nations *to fear the* LORD, *and ſerve him in truth with all the heart*. For all Nations are not only alike ſubject to him, but equally dependant upon him, for the *Grant*, *Preſervation*, and *Continuance* of their national Privileges, and ſo *equally* obliged to obey the Laws he hath ſet before them; for tho' the ſame numerical Laws, no not of *moral* Righteouſneſs, are not ſet before all Nations, he giving ſome *greater*, and ſome *leſſer* Knowledge of *theſe Laws*, according to his good Pleaſure, from whence ariſes the different Obligations of Mankind, yet he expecteth from each Nation according to the publick Talent deliver'd to each, and the Means and Opportunity they have to improve it.

HENCE, *Thirdly*, we plainly may infer the greatneſs of our own publick Obligation to *fear the* LORD, *and to ſerve him in truth*, ſeeing that it may juſtly be expoſtulated with us, *For what nation hath ſtatutes and judgments ſo righteous as all thoſe I have laid before you this day?* And ſeeing we have ſuch Helps and Motives to Obedience from the *Rewards* and *Grace* given us as Chriſtians, and ſeeing ourſelves in the midſt of ſuch an abundance of Bleſſings *ſpiritual* and *temporal*,

ral, and guarded and preſerved by ſo many *eminent* Inſtances of GOD's *watchful* and *ſaving* Providence; ſo that we ſhall be the moſt ungrateful and ſinful People upon Earth, if by our joint Endeavours in the Ways of the Chriſtian Life we do not cauſe our *national* Righteouſneſs, Piety, and good Works, to bear a Proportion to the *great things he hath done for us.*

HENCE in particular the Sovereigns of this bleſſed Nation may ſee the *Prudence*, the *Felicity*, and the *Honour* of governing themſelves and their People by RELIGION; how it reflects double Luſtre upon Majeſty, when they repreſent the divine Holineſs as well as the divine Power, and follow thoſe Reſolutions of holy King *David* in their Royal Conduct, *I will not know a wicked perſon; whoſo leadeth a godly life, he ſhall be my ſervant, and he that telleth lies ſhall not tarry in my ſight*, becauſe every *wiſe king ſcattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.* How this would enable them in the beſt manner to ſecure and enjoy their Dominions; for *the throne is eſtabliſhed by righteouſneſs:* How it would even extend their Dominion, and fortify their Guard, by ſetting up a *Throne* in the *Heart* of each Subject, to which *each* would pay a *chearful* Duty. For nothing is ſo endearing to the *good Part* of the Subjects as *univerſal Goodneſs* in their SOVEREIGN; and nothing is ſo *ſoftning* to *bad ones*; for the *Goodneſs* of a *King*, like that of GOD, whom he immediately repreſents, *leadeth to repentance.* Hence they may alſo learn the high Aggravations of Guilt, and the ſpecial *Abomination it is for Kings to do*, or to connive at *wickedneſs.* Conſidering, that GOD *is a king among princes*, that he can *reſtrain the ſpirit of princes*; that *he leadeth princes away ſpoiled*; that he is a King over all the Children of Pride; *that he changeth the times*, and *removeth and ſetteth up kings.* That *no king can be ſa-*

ved by the multitude of an hoſt; that *wiſdom is better than ſtrength*; that *the way of the* LORD *is ſtrength*; that *he poureth contempt upon* (bad) *princes*, and that he hath inſtructed his Prophet to admoniſh all ſuch in theſe Words, *Say unto the king, and to the queen, humble your ſelves, ſit down, for your principalities ſhall come down, even the crown in which ye glory*; * *for they have not ſerved thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodneſs which thou gaveſt them, and in the large and fat land which thou gaveſt before them* †.

HENCE our noble and honourable SENATORS may learn the *true Political Wiſdom*, by pointing all their Views, Counſels, and Acts, to the Advancement of GOD's Glory, the Good of his Church, the Safety, Honour, and Welfare of the Sovereign and his Kingdoms; and whenever they ſhall perceive a *Confederacy* of ill Men forming themſelves againſt the LORD and his ANOINTED, and the *People* of the LORD, and forgetting their publick Duty, and endeavouring only in the *ways of corruption* to enrich themſelves, and *ſtrengthen themſelves in their wickedneſs*; how much it will then concern thoſe that are *faithful in the* LORD zealouſly to *oppoſe* them? And if ever *iniquity ſhould ſo far abound*, that they neither by *legal* Numbers, nor *faithful* Counſels, ſhall be able to *over-rule* and *prevent* their evil Meaſures, then with Hearts full of the *fear of the* LORD, and of *Loyalty* and *publick Spirit*, let them ſeparate themſelves from ſuch Enemies to GOD and *Men*, and each ſay to his Soul, *O my ſoul, come not thou into their ſecret, unto their aſſemblies, mine honour, be not thou united*; and let them even diſtinguiſh themſelves by the *juſt* Regard to their *Soul*, and to their *Honour*, as never to *betray* the Cauſe of GOD and *Virtue* for the ſinful Reward of a *Bribe*, nor to admit,

* Jerem. xiii. 18. † Nehem. ix. 35.

as

as a *Fetter* upon their *Integrity* the *mean* Temptation of a *Stipend*. And let ſuch *faithful* PATRIOTS, if even they ſhould ſuffer the *Loſs* of any Worldly *Honour* or *Profit*, by means of their *Fidelity*, be ſolaced with the Conſolation of their partaking in the high Reputation of *Moſes*, that eminent Servant and Prophet of GOD, *in chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of* GOD, *than to enjoy*, in Pharaoh's Court, *the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.*

HENCE our holy Fathers of the Church, our Biſhops, may ſee the ſtricteſt Obligation upon them, when they *ſit in the Congregation of Princes*, to give no Counſel but what is *from the* LORD; to abide conſtantly by that excellent Rule of the Prophet *Balaam*, *the word that* GOD *putteth in my mouth*, *that will I ſpeak*; eſpecially to imitate him in that glorious *ſelf-denying* Reſolution, *If Balak* (the King) *would give me his houſe full of ſilver and gold I cannot go beyond the word of the* LORD *my* GOD, *to do leſs or more*; conſidering what a Debaſement it would be to their *ſupreme* Order in the *Church* to proſtitute their *ſpiritual* Thrones to do any of the *mean* Drudgery and *ſinful* Services of *temporal* ones.

HENCE our Judges in all Ages may learn to arrive at the moſt amiable Character of the *upright Job*, by *putting on*, after his Example, *righteouſneſs as their clothing*, and *judgment as a* ROBE and DIADEM; the Conſequence of which was to JOB, *when the ear heard him, it bleſſed him.* And conſidering that theſe *awful* Magiſtrates ſit to declare the *Judgment of* GOD, it would be the worſt Abuſe of their *Truſt*, and the greateſt Forfeiture of their *Honour*, for them ever to receive either the Matter of their Charge, or the Meaſures of their Juſtice, from the depraved Inclination and Dictates of any corrupt and irreligious Court, or of any howſoever great Benefactor.

HENCE

HENCE our Clergy of the inferior Claſs, to whoſe daily Labours and religious Care the Souls of the People of this Land are immediately committed, may learn at all times to diſcharge their divine Truſt with the utmoſt Fidelity, and never to handle the Word of GOD deceitfully, but *as of ſincerity*, *but as of* GOD, *in the ſight of* GOD *, conſtantly to ſpeak the Truth, boldly to rebuke Vice, and though never deſirous, yet always reſign'd, meekly to ſuffer for the Truth ſake, and maugre all Diſcouragements of this World, and in Denial of all Worldly Temptations and Allurements, ſo to *take heed to themſelves*, *and to their doctrines*, *that they may ſave their own ſouls*, *and theirs that hear them*.

HENCE our Magiſtrates of the inferior Order may learn with *Zeal*, though not with *Power*, *equal* to our ſuperior Judges, truly and indifferently to miniſter Juſtice, to the Puniſhment of Wickedneſs and Vice, and to the Maintenance of GOD's true Religion among us.

HENCE our military Commanders and Officers, of whatever Denomination, may learn to keep themſelves, and thoſe under their reſpective Commands, in Obedience to the *Civil Power* and the *Laws of* GOD. And as they are commendably diſtinguiſhed for their *Honour*, may never forfeit *that Honour* by receiving *Pay*, nor by uſing *Force* againſt their *King*, nor againſt their *Country*.

HENCE our Merchants, many of whom, like thoſe of *Tyre*, may be compared, without Offence, to ſome *Princes* for the Splendor of their Condition, for the Greatneſs of their Fortunes, and for the Civility of their Manners, may always learn, by a fair Commerce, *to render to all their due*, *to pay tribute where*

* 2 Cor. ij. 17.

tribute

tribute is due, cuſtom to whom cuſtom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

HENCE this moſt renowned City, to which the Character of *Tyre*, in reſpect of Commerce, literally belongs, *whoſe traffickers are the honourable of the earth*, and *the harveſt of the river is her revenue*, and *ſhe is a mart of nations*, may learn by the religious Privileges which ſhe enjoys above *Tyre*, or any City in the World, to be as renowned for her *Piety*, and *Virtue*, and *good Works*, as ſhe is for her *Riches* and *Splendor*.

HENCE all the private Subjects of this Nation, who move in no Sphere of publick Power, may learn to *ſtudy to be quiet, and to do their own buſineſs, to lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godlineſs and honeſty*, to *fear* GOD, and to *do his prophets no harm*, to *reverence his prieſts* (*whoſe mouths preſerve knowledge*) *and give them their portion*; and, in a Word, to honour, adorn, and defend this happy Conſtitution in Church and State, to *fear* GOD *and the King, and not meddle with them that are given to change.*

THEN may we all, *from the King on his Throne to the Poor on the Dunghill*, put our Truſt in the LORD our GOD, and in the Mercy of the moſt High, we ſhall none of us miſcarry.

To conclude; Having every one of us fully conſidered how GREAT THINGS GOD hath done for us, *let us fear the* LORD, *and ſerve him in truth with all our heart*; let us rejoice together with an innocent and pious Mirth for the Bleſſings of the Day; and *let us* ALL *ſtand up and bleſs the* LORD *our* GOD *for ever and ever; and bleſſed be his glorious name, which is exalted far above bleſſing and praiſe.* AMEN.

FINIS.

Lately publiſhed,

THE Sacred Authority of Chriſtian Biſhops, and the Piety of Praying for them in Priſon. A Sermon preached at *Rocheſter* Cathedral, on Occaſion of the Impriſonment of Dr. ATTERBURY, late Biſhop of *Rocheſter*.

A Sermon preached at *Hertford*-School Feaſt.

A Sermon preached at the opening of *Dartford*-Work-houſe.

Theſe three by *Charles Chambres*, M. A. Vicar of *Dartford*, *Kent*.

Printed for *Tho. Aſtley*, at the *Roſe*, over againſt the North-Door of St. *Paul*'s.

CHRISTIANITY

Distinct from the

Religion of *Nature*,

In ANSWER

To a late Book, Entitled,

Christianity as Old as the Creation, &c.

PART. I.

Being an Examination of the Author's *General Hypothesis*, that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion differ only in the manner of their being communicated.*

By THOMAS BROUGHTON, A. M.
Reader at the Temple-Church.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

THE *Ingenious Author, whoſe elaborate Performance I have undertaken to examine, pretends to have diſcover'd the true and only* Secret *of* Reconciling Natural and Reveal'd Religion: *A Secret truly* Such *hitherto; and for which the Chriſtian World is ſolely indebted to the happy Genius and Penetration of this Author. Indeed, when we conſider how natural and eaſy an* Hypotheſis *this Gentleman has luckily hit upon, it may ſeem a little Strange, that it ſhou'd ſo long have eſcap'd the ſagacity and diligence of the learneded Chriſtian Writers. But the Glory of it was due by Fate to the* Preſent Age, *and the particular Honour of the Diſcovery reſerv'd for the Ingenious Author of* Chriſtianity as Old as the Creation, *&c.*

Had the Learned Apologiſts *for the* Chriſtian Religion *been acquainted with this* modern Hypotheſis, *what an infinite deal of Trouble wou'd it have ſav'd them? How ſuperfluous now appear all their Labours; how unneceſſary the Pains they took in vindicating the* particular *Doctrines and Precepts of this Religion, by ſhewing their conformity and agreement with the unprejudic'd Dictates of Right Reaſon? Had they dreamt of our Author's* Scheme, *they might have thrown by their Pens, and only reply'd to their Adverſaries, that* Chriſtianity *was but* Another Name for the Religion of Nature, *and the buſineſs had been done; nor need they have Spent their time, and their oil, in proving the* Sun *to be* as bright as the Sun, *or* Snow as white as Snow. *But they were fooliſhly taught to think there was ſomething* more *in the* Religion of Jeſus, *than in* That *of* Meer Nature.

Notwithſtanding the many excellent Apologies *for the* Reaſonableneſs *of* Chriſtianity, *This Gentleman is confident, that the receiv'd Notions concerning it tend to deſtroy that* Harmony, *which ought to ſubſiſt between* It, *and the* Religion of Nature; *and therefore, prompted by Zeal for the Honour of Religion, and griev'd, that two ſuch good Friends ſhou'd differ,*

he

he kindly interpoſes for their mutual Reconciliation. *But*

— Aliquis latet Error, Equo ne credite Teucri.

There have been many Attempts of late to deſtroy the Credit of the Chriſtian Revelation. *To effect this, the Authors have generally levell'd their Arguments againſt the* Evidence *of it: A Method of Attack, which requires the* Infidel *to be a Man of great Reading, and well vers'd in* Antiquity. *If the Attack be made on the* Prophecies *of the* Old Teſtament, *ſaid to be accompliſh'd in the perſon of* Chriſt; *the Author muſt be equipp'd with a large ſhare of* Hiſtorical *and* Critical Learning. *To overthrow the Credit of our Saviour's* Miracles, *he muſt miſapply the* Allegorical Interpretations *of the* Fathers; *and conſequently muſt have read 'em. Our Author's Oppoſition is carry'd on at a much eaſier rate, and at little or no expence of Learning. It cuts the Controverſy between the Patrons of* Chriſtianity *and* Deiſm *extreamly ſhort. To what purpoſe ſhou'd you diſpute whether the* Chriſtian Religion *be a* true *Religion, if it be an* Uſeleſs *one? Admit but its* Inſignificancy; *and any controverſy about the* Authority

thority *of the* Evangelical Writings *is of leſs importance, if poſſible, than the famous one between a* great Critick, *and a* great Wit, *about the* Genuineneſs *of* Phalaris's Epiſtles.

If this Author's Scheme *be juſtly founded, what becomes of the boaſted* Advantages *of* Chriſtianity *above the* Religion of Nature? *In vain may ſhe plead, that ſhe has inſtructed us in the* True Worſhip *of the* Supream Being, *from which Mankind (even the* Politeſt Nations) *had univerſally departed: that ſhe has brought* Life and Immortality to Light, *by giving us a full aſſurance of a* Future State, *concerning which the* Learnedeſt Heathens *confeſs'd their doubts: that ſhe has aſſur'd the* Sinner *of (what he cou'd never be certain of from the* Light of Nature) *not only* Pardon *and* Impunity, *but even of* Favour *and Eternal Happineſs, upon the eaſy terms of* Repentance: *that ſhe has given the World a* compleat and uniform Syſtem *of* Morality, *which, till then, lay ſcatter'd in the endleſs Writings of a* croud *of* Philoſophers; *attended with* Difficulties, Uncertainties, *and even* Contradictions: *and, laſtly, that ſhe has encourag'd and promoted the practice of virtue and good-*

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neſs by ſtronger Obligations, *by* nobler *and* better Motives, *and by ſuch* Duties *of a* Poſitive *Nature, as evidently tend more effectually to ſecure the Intereſts of* True Religion *in the world. All theſe, and many other, Advantages ſhe may now boaſt in vain. If this Author's* Scheme *takes place, ſhe muſt be contented for the future to ſtand upon the footing of* meer Natural Religion, *if not to give way to it, as the better and more Perfect Syſtem of the Two.*

When we conſider how eaſy and compendious *an* Hypotheſis *That of our Author's is, one wou'd think it might lye in the compaſs of a few Sheets, and be compriz'd, at moſt, in a* Shilling Pamphlet: *inſtead of which, out comes a* thick Quarto, *cloſely printed, in a ſmall Letter. He makes his Attack, not like a* light-arm'd Parthian, *with a Sling only, or a Bow; but* Goliah-like; *as if he thought by the* weight *and* bulk *of his armour to bear down Chriſtianity, in ſpite of the Strongeſt Oppoſition. And yet, arm'd as this* Champion *is at preſent, he is but* half equipp'd; *for we are threatned with* Volume the Second; *Which, from the practice of all Authors, Antient and Modern, I preſume will not be inferior, in bulk and ſize, to this he has*

has already favour'd the world with. And yet I will venture to aſſure the Reader, that the Subſtance of this formidable *work might be drawn up even in a leſs compaſs, than what I have mention'd.*

If any one, who has not read our Author's performance, is curious to know by what arts he has ſwell'd ſo brief *an* Hypotheſis *to ſo* large *a ſize; He has done it, firſt, by expreſſing the ſame Propoſition in a great* variety *of Language; for, to do him juſtice, he is a dextrous* maſter *of the* noble Science *of* Tautology: *next, by many and long* Quotations *from our moſt eminent* Engliſh Divines, *and others; whoſe ſentiments concerning the Excellency and Perfection of Natural Religion he has endeavour'd to accommodate to his own Syſtem; ſo that were you only to turn over the Leaves, and obſerve the* great Names *cited in the* Margin, *you wou'd imagine, that* Tillotſon, Locke, Barrow, Stanhope, Sherlock, *&c. were all of the ſame Sentiments with the Ingenious Dr.* T—l: *in the next place, by a long detail of the ſad conſequences, and extream miſchiefs, of* Bigotry, Prieſtcraft, *and* Superſtition; *in which, it muſt be confeſs'd, he has laid out a great deal of* Rhetorick, *and* Reading:

Reading: *and laſtly by numberleſs* miſapplications *and* miſinterpretations *of Scripture.*

But there is one Beauty *in his manner of treating the ſubject, which I cannot help taking notice of, and that is* The Dialogue. " *This (he tells us in his* " Preface) *was by the Antients eſteem'd* " *the moſt proper, as well as prudent,* " *Way of expoſing prevailing Abſurdi-* " *ties; and* Tully's *two Books* De Na- " tura Deorum, *and* De Divinatione, " *both levell'd againſt the ſuperſtition of* " *his country-men, are living monuments* " *of the uſefulneſs and expediency of this* " *manner of writing.*" *I entirely agree with him in his approbation of this manner of writing. But how has he copied theſe* excellent Originals? *In* Cicero's *Pieces the Perſons of the Dialogue are all allow'd fair Play. Whatever can be pleaded on either ſide of the Queſtion is fairly produc'd.* Tully's *own Sentiments are generally diſſembled, whilſt he holds the Balance with an impartial hand between the* Stoick, *the* Academick, *and the* Epicurean. *But How different is our Author's Conduct? The Perſons of* his Dialogue *are* A. *and* B.— A. *is the* little-Hero *of the Argument; and poor* B. *is only introduc'd, to give the* doughty Diſputant *an Opportunity of exulting in*

the ſuperiority of his underſtanding. Whatever he ſays is very little to the purpoſe: he even fancies Difficulties, *where there are none. Thus the One ſubmits before he is confuted, and the Other* triumphs without a victory. *This* Artifice *of our Author's puts me in mind of the* awkward Excuſe, *which* Bayes, *in* the Rehearſal, *makes for the* fillineſs *and* impertinence *of one of his* Characters, *which was, that* he underwrit that part on purpoſe to ſet off the reſt.

I might obſerve, likewiſe, an Impropriety *(not to ſay a* contradiction) *in the very* Title of his Book. *For if the* Goſpel *be but* a Republication of the Law of Nature, *how can* Chriſtianity be as old as the Creation; *unleſs the* Republication *of a* Law *can be as old as* the Law itſelf? *Suppoſe the* Subſtance *of a* Law, *made in the Reign of* Harry the eighth, *be* re-enacted *in That of* George the Second, *wou'd it be proper, or even true, to ſay, that the* latter *Act of Parliament bears the* ſame date *with the former, becauſe the* Subſtance *of them both is* the ſame? — *Is the late* Dr. Clarke's new Edition of Homer as old *as the* Poem itſelf? *I deſign not to quarel with him for a meer* Inaccuracy, *or* Impropriety *of Expreſſion, ſince his meaning is plain enough. My rea-*

ſon

ſon for this Remark is, becauſe he has evidently borrowed the Title *of his Book from the preſent* Biſhop of Bangor's Sermon before the Societies for the Propagation of the Goſpel. *(vid. Chriſt. as old,* &c. *p. 79.) But, ſurely, it is one thing to ſay, with his Lordſhip, that* The Goſpel *(or* Chriſtianity) is DECLARATIVE *of* THAT RELIGION, WHICH was as old as the Creation; *and another, to ſay, with our Author, that* Chriſtianity, ITSELF is as old as the Creation.

Before I finiſh my Preface, *it may be proper to acquaint the Reader with the Method I intend to purſue, in anſwering the Author of* Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, *&c. Tho' the Objections, which he has ſtarted againſt the* Chriſtian Revelation, *be what he had* Principally *in view, as the true End and Deſign of his Scheme; yet, to ſet out with an* immediate Reply *to* thoſe Objections *is, I apprehend, to begin at the wrong end of the Controverſy; ſince, if he can but eſtabliſh his* General Hypotheſis, *that* Natural *and* Reveal'd Religion differ only in the manner of their being communicated, *Chriſtianity muſt fall of courſe, as will appear, when we come to conſider the neceſſary conſequences of it. It is, therefore, the Buſineſs of this* firſt Part, *with which I now preſent*

the Reader, to cut off this Retreat, this Dernier Reſort, *and to deſtroy the very Foundation, upon which All his Arguments againſt the Expediency and Uſe of* Divine Revelation *are founded: and that, by ſtating the* true Notion *of the* Perfection *of* Natural Religion *(the grand ſupport of our Author's* Hypotheſis) *in ſuch a manner, as to avoid the two Extreams of Aſſerting, with* Him, Natural Religion *to be* Abſolutely Perfect; *with* others, *to be Abſolutely* Imperfect; *and to leave Room for God Almighty to give his Creatures* Occaſional Laws, *as their Wants and Exigencies may require. The Reader will likewiſe here ſee the* true foundation, *upon which alone the* Expediency *of* Revelation *can be built.*

In my next Part I propoſe to conſider the other Branch of this Author's Scheme; which is, that No Poſitive Precepts can be a Part either of Natural or Reveal'd Religion: *A Point, which, in his opinion, can alone decide the Queſtion,* Whether Natural and Reveal'd Religion do really differ.

When this is done, it will be, then, *proper to anſwer this Author's moſt* material Objections *to the Credit and Authority of* Revelation in general, *and* The Chriſtian in particular.

THAT

THAT it is the *real* Deſign of the Author of *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, &c. to ſet aſide the *Goſpel Revelation*, not only as *uſeleſs*, but even *prejudicial*, to mankind, is very plain, notwithſtanding his repeated profeſſions to the contrary, from the very different Lights, in which he has ſeverally plac'd *Natural* and *Reveal'd Religion*. The former he every where deſcribes as *abſolutely ſufficient*, alike at *all times*, for all the purpoſes of Human *Happineſs*, and, among others, beſtows on it this glorious Encomium, that " If the higheſt inter-
" nal Excellence, the greateſt Plainneſs
" and Simplicity, Unanimity, Univerſa-
" lity, and Antiquity, nay Eternity, can
" recommend a Law; all theſe do, in

" an eminent degree, belong to the " Law of Nature; a Law, which does " not depend on the uncertain meaning " of Words and Phraſes in dead Lan- " guages, much leſs on Types, Meta- " phors, Allegories, and Parables; or " on the skill, or honeſty, of weak, or " deſigning, Tranſcribers (not to men- " tion Tranſlators) but on the immuta- " ble Relations of Things, always vi- " ſible to the whole World:" (*p.* 64.) whereas *Revelation*, beſides that it is encumber'd with all the abovemention'd Difficulties and Uncertainties, from which the *Law of Nature* is free, is repreſented, as frequently contradicting the Nature and Reaſon of Things; as being of doubtful and uncertain Evidence; as Partial and Ineffectual to the Purpoſes, for which it was given; and as having been actually the Cauſe of Infinite Inconveniencies and miſchiefs to mankind.

It is true, our Author does not openly avow this *hoſtile* deſign againſt the Chriſtian Revelation: on the Contrary, *His* is the moſt *Healing* Scheme imaginable; is calculated " greately to ad- " vance the Honour of *External* Reve- " lation, by ſhewing the perfect Agree- " ment between *That* and *Internal* Re- " velation;

" velation; and, by ſo doing, deſtroys " one of the moſt ſucceſsful Attempts, " that has been made on Religion, by " ſetting the Laws of God at variance." (*p.* 8.) And it muſt be confeſs'd, to the Honour of this Gentleman's Scheme, that He has luckily hit upon a moſt infallible method of *Reconciling* Natural and Reveal'd Religion, and that is, by making 'em both, *in all reſpects*, exactly *the Same*; and *Chriſtianity* muſt for the future moſt unnaturally quarrel with *Itſelf*, if it is any longer *at variance* with the *Law of Nature*.

But the Truth is, He pays Revelation but an aukward Compliment; and the mask of pretended Friendſhip is too thin a diſguiſe to cover and conceal the Real Foe. He treats *Revelation* juſt as *Epicurus* did the *Gods*; of whom it was obſerv'd, that, *tho' in words he acknowledg'd a Deity, yet in reality and effect, he denied his Exiſtence* *; and, as that old *Philoſopher*, by excluding the *Providence* of the Gods from the Government of Human Affairs, did, to all the purpoſes of Religion, deſtroy their Exiſtence, and conſequentially eſta-

* Epicurum verbis reliquiſſe Deos, re ſuſtuliſſe. *Cic. de Nat. Deorum. lib.* 2.

bliſh downright *Atheiſm*; Our Author, by making *Revelation* of *no Uſe* or Advantage to the World, does as effectually take away its *Reality*, and by neceſſary conſequence muſt recur to abſolute *Deiſm*.

To evince the Juſtice of this Charge, we ſhall not at preſent appeal to his particular Treatment of the *Chriſtian Revelation*. His Objections to the *Goſpel Scheme* are but the Sallies and Excurſions of an Enemy from his Head Quarters, and intended to illuſtrate and exemplify his *General Hypotheſis*; which being deſign'd to ſtrike at *all poſſible Revelation*, is an Argument, *a priori*, againſt That *particular One* of the Goſpel.

For I deſire it may be conſider'd, whether to aſſert, that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion* cannot poſſibly *differ* but *in the manner of their being communicated*, be not greatly to *leſſen*, if not entirely *deſtroy*, all Uſe and Expediency of the latter. For is it not directly to affirm, that *Reveal'd Religion* can teach us nothing, but what *Natural Religion* had *ſufficiently* inſtructed us in before; or, in other words, that it is inconſiſtent with the Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, to make *any* diſcovery of his

his Will to mankind, by *expreſs Revelation*, to which his own unaſſiſted *Reaſon* cou'd not *as well* have led him without it?

If *Natural Reaſon* alone be, at *all times*, a *ſufficient Guide* in matters of Religion, I wou'd ask this Gentleman, zealous as he is for its Honour, What He has left for *Revelation* to perform? A Man wou'd be thought impertinent, who ſhou'd offer to direct another the right way, whom he ſaw provided of a *ſufficient Guide*. And is not *Revelation*, upon this Gentleman's Scheme, as uſeleſs, not to ſay impertinent, an Offer? If it be a juſt maxim in Natural Philoſophy, that *Nature does nothing in vain*, that all her operations are conducted by deſign, and for wiſe ends and purpoſes, can we ſuppoſe the *Author of Nature*, a Being of Infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, acting, in any of his diſpenſations to his Creatures, in vain and to no purpoſe? Thus this Gentleman, by aſcribing to *Natural Reaſon* an *abſolute ſufficiency* in religious matters, does, in effect, make *Revelation* of *no Uſe*, and, by neceſſary conſequence, denies its very *reality* and Exiſtence.

This conſequence I make no doubt he ſaw, and even deſign'd ſhou'd follow

low from his Hypotheſis, tho' at the expence of ſetting his Profeſſions at variance with his Principles, and being inconſiſtent with himſelf. However, as he grants, in words at leaſt, and as his Scheme neceſſarily ſuppoſes a *Revelation* to have been *actually* given to the World; let us try, whether this very Conceſſion may not be improv'd into a good Argument, *a priori*, why Reveal'd Religion ſhou'd, *in ſome reſpects, differ* from *Natural.*

I argue thus. If a Revelation be *actually* given to the World, it muſt be given for ſome *reaſon*, or for none. If for ſome, I ask, What was That reaſon? I am ſure our Author will agree with me, that Man, in his *Original* State and Condition, ſtood in no need of Revelation. It follows, then, (ſince God cannot be ſuppos'd to give it, when it was not wanted) that there muſt have happen'd ſome *change* in the condition of Human Nature. This *Change*, then, whatever it was, and however it came to paſs, was the *Ground* and *Reaſon* of the Revelation. And if ſo, is it not reaſonable to conclude, that a *Reveal'd* Religion, the *Expediency* of which is built upon a ſuppos'd *Alteration* in the State of Human Nature, ſhou'd,

ſhou'd, in *ſome reſpects*, *differ* from meer *Natural Religion*, which was the Religion of mankind in its original, primitive, State? — It is not my buſineſs, at preſent, to ſhew, in *what* reſpects Reveal'd Religion differs from Natural: It is ſufficient for my preſent purpoſe to demonſtrate the Reaſonableneſs of concluding, *a priori*, that it *may* do ſo in *ſome* reſpects.

I confeſs, Our Author's Scheme is not quite ſo inconſiſtent with itſelf, as to ſuppoſe any *real change* to have happen'd in Human Nature. He even reaſons from the contrary Suppoſition, that it has been always *the Same*; tho', in this opinion, he plainly runs counter to Reaſon, Hiſtory, and Experience. Yet I deſire it may be obſerv'd, from the foregoing Chain of Argument, that the Suppoſition of an *actual Revelation* being given to the World does, of itſelf, without the ſupports of Hiſtory, or Experience, clearly infer *ſome Change* to have really happen'd. What an additional ſtrength, then, muſt this Reaſoning receive, when Hiſtory and Experience unite in confirming its Truth and Juſtneſs, and in demonſtrating *that* to have really come to paſs, which Reaſon alone, from the conſideration

them, *for consider how great things he hath done for you.* And, Secondly, To consider the dangerous Consequences of not complying with that *divine* Admonition, namely, that it would be the Ruin of their *private* and *publick* HAPPINESS: *But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both* YE *and your* KING.

IT is true, the Words were originally spoken to the Nation of the *Jews*, with a *primary* View to their religious Conduct. But when we consider that *all the scripture* of the Prophets *was given by inspiration of God* *, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness to all People called to Religion by the same Spirit of GOD, *that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*, we must needs acknowledge they have a *secondary* View to all *Christians*, who were called to Religion by the Messiah of the *Jews*, JESUS CHRIST, the *eternal* and *incarnate* Son of GOD, through the *Eternal Spirit*, the SPIRIT of GOD the FATHER and GOD the SON. And this will justify my Application of them to *Christians* in general, and this Christian Audience in particular.

IN order therefore to recommend and enforce this divine Instruction and Admonition in a manner suitable to this Occasion, I beg leave,

FIRST, To explain the Import of the Words, to point out this good and right Way, by shewing what is understood by *fearing the* LORD, *and serving him in truth, with all the heart.*

SECONDLY, To enforce the Duties here recommended by the same Motives mentioned by the Prophet, applied to our selves, namely,

FIRST, From the Recollection of the *Greatness* and *Variety* of GOD'S BENEFICENCE towards this

* 2 Tim. iij. 16.

Nation,

Nation, with a particular Reſpect to the Bleſſings of this Day, to commemorate which, in a moſt religious manner, we are now aſſembled.

SECONDLY, From the Conſideration of the dangerous Conſequences of our not complying with this *divine* Admonition, namely, that it threatens the Ruin of our *private* and *publick* Happineſs, in the Deſtruction both of Us and our KING.

LASTLY, I ſhall draw Two or Three ſuitable Inferences from the whole.

FIRST, I am to explain the Import of the Words, by ſhewing what is underſtood by fearing the LORD, and ſerving him in Truth, with all the Heart.

TO fear the LORD, in the Language of Holy Scripture, generally imports that true inward Senſe of the Divine Nature and Perfections that effectually prevails with us to the outward Exerciſes of all the Duties of inſtituted Religion; which Fear is therefore juſtly put, as it often is in Scripture, to ſignify all Religion, it being the very Life and Principle of it, without which all outward Profeſſions and Exerciſes of Religion ſignify nothing. This Fear is a compound Paſſion, or *Senſe* of the Mind, conſiſting of a diſtinct Perception and Admiration of God's inherent and communicative Perfections, accompanied *always* with a juſt Apprehenſion of his perfect Holineſs and Juſtice, creating in us a reaſonable Fear and Averſion to the Guilt and Puniſhment of Sin.

THIS Religious Fear is created in us, *partly* by every Man's Reflections, or *natural* Reaſoning, upon the viſible Things of this great World, and the greater Miracle, his own Being and Perfections of Body and Mind, by which is made manifeſt the Foundation of Religion, in a plain Diſcovery of thoſe inviſible Things of GOD, even his eternal Power and Godhead; and partly by reflecting impartially upon the Divine Credit and Import of the Holy Scripture, as a ſupplemental Revelation from GOD to us concerning Religion, wherein we are taught the Nature of GOD and Man, and the Duties

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ariſing from them, in a more authentick manner, and enabled to perform them with more Alacrity, Strength, and Succeſs, through the Motives of the Goſpel, and the ſupernatural Grace exhibited to Believers in the Uſe of the Chriſtian Ordinances. So that it is plain, the original Religion given to Man was not ſo perfect as that given to him ſince by the written Inſpirations of God in the Scriptures; and therefore the Religion of Nature, as it is applied to Man, was not an abſolutely perfect Religion, as is pretended by our modern Deiſts: Becauſe judging from the Writings and Actions of the beſt Heathens before, or without the Scriptures, the beſt Samples of human Nature, it is a Demonſtration that Men became more knowing, more virtuous in themſelves, and more beneficent to others, and conſequently more perfect, and more happy Creatures, ſince their Knowledge of the Scriptures, than before. So that now the Fear of the Lord imports ſuch a lively and true Senſe of the Divine Nature and Will applied to Man, as may be learnt by the joint Aſſiſtance of Human Reaſon and Holy Scripture.

To ſerve the Lord in conſequence of this inward Fear, is the outward Exerciſe of all the Duties underſtood to be preſcribed us by Right Reaſon, and the poſitive Inſtitutions of Revealed Religion, out of a Conſcience towards God, and a moral Senſe of Obedience due to all his Commandments, which muſt, in regard to his immutable and abſolute Perfections, whatever vain Men may think, be Holy, Juſt, and Good.

Indeed in this conceited Age, wherein intellectual Pride is ſo Aſſuming and Triumphant, we are told otherwiſe, that Religion conſiſts wholly in the Obſervation of meer moral Virtue, and that in the Way that every Man thinks to be ſuch; and that inſtituted Religion is an Impoſition upon Mankind, and every Man is at Liberty to caſt away the pretended Duties of it with Reſentment and Deriſion.

But for a ſhort Confutation of theſe vain meer Moraliſts, may we ask them what they themſelves mean by meer moral Virtue, the Diſtinction they are ſo fond of? Do they mean that Order of Thought and Action which ariſes from the conſtituted Nature of Things, as conſtituted by the infinite Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Holineſs of God, or what together they call the immutable Righteouſneſs of God? If they do, is not this immutable Righteouſneſs of God that ſteady and harmonious Regard of the divine Will to all the Perfections of the Deity, by the Aſſemblage of which into one unerring, all-knowing, and all-gracious, general Perfection, he reſolves and does every thing, and without which he can do nothing? Is not this therefore that Righteouſneſs, or univerſal Rectitude, by which he conſtituted the Nature and Relation of Things from which Conſtitution all moral Virtue ariſes? And is not this that Righteouſneſs, or unerring Rectitude, by which he inſtituted the poſitive Duties of Revealed Religion, as effectual Helps to the Perfections of moral Virtue, and as Specimens to prove our moral Obedience by? If ſo, is it not ſufficient, in order to juſtify our moral Obedience to theſe poſitive Inſtitutions, that they have all the moral Evidence poſſible for their divine Appointment, and ſo lay all poſſible moral Obligation upon us to obey them, without the Conceit and Arrogance of aſſuming to ourſelves a Power of diſtinguiſhing which Actions are fitteſt to be done, thoſe conſtituted at the Creation of Man, or thoſe conſtituted at his Redemption, which opens more Glories and divine Priviledges to Man than his Creation, or taking upon us to judge which are better of God's Determinations and Actions, this or that; eſpecially conſidering that this Limitation of Duty to meer moral Virtue, in the Senſe they contend for it, ſaps the Foundation of moral Virtue in general, and prevents the Eſtabliſhment of any ſtated Religion in the World in particular, and ſo cuts off all the outward Exerciſe of Religion in the World.

A SINCERE Moraliſt therefore upon his own Principle, his Love, and entire Attachment to moral Virtue, whether he conſiders poſitive Inſtitutions, as having the ſame moral Foundation, in the Nature of GOD and Man, or as Helps ordained by GOD to teſtify and compleat our moral Obedience, he muſt obſerve them as perfective of that moral Virtue he adores, and aſpires to be perfect in: And therefore muſt heartily embrace Revealed Religion upon the moral Evidence on which its divine Authority ſtands; muſt firmly believe, meekly hear, diligently read, and conſcientiouſly obey the Scriptures; muſt join in the publick Worſhip of GOD in ſome uniform and ſcriptural manner; muſt devoutly uſe GOD's holy Sacraments, and rely upon the Power and Truth of GOD for their ſanctifying and ſaving Efficacy; muſt ſanctify the Sabbath, to keep it holy; muſt obey GOD in the outward Adminiſtration of the viſible Church by ſuch Perſons whom GOD hath ſpecially called and appointed for that Purpoſe, *obeying them that have the rule over them, who watch for their ſouls.* All theſe poſitive Inſtitutions of Religion are to be complied with for moral Reaſons, as appointed by GOD, and as known by Experience to enlarge the Bounds, and perfect the Meaſure of moral Virtue. And therefore, in ſhort, the true Import of fearing and ſerving the LORD is expreſſed, in our excellent Church-Catechiſm, under our Duty towards GOD, which we learnt whilſt we were Children, which is our Duty now we are Men, and will be ſo whilſt we have a Being, *viz.* TO BELIEVE IN HIM, TO FEAR HIM, AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL OUR HEART, WITH ALL OUR MIND, WITH ALL OUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH; TO WORSHIP HIM, TO GIVE HIM THANKS, TO PUT OUR WHOLE TRUST IN HIM, TO CALL UPON HIM, TO HONOUR HIS HOLY NAME, AND HIS WORD, AND TO SERVE HIM TRULY ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE.

THIS is the Good and the Right Way recommended by the Prophet, by divine Authority, in the Text, couched

ed under the general Inſtruction of fearing the LORD, and ſerving him in Truth, and with all the Heart. I proceed then,

SECONDLY, To enforce the Duties here recommended by the ſame Motives mentioned by the Prophet, applied to ourſelves.

FIRST, From a Recollection of the Greatneſs and Variety of GOD's Beneficence towards this NATION. *For conſider how great things he hath done for you.*

To recount all the Inſtances of GOD's publick Favours to this Land, whereby, under his Providence, we have been conducted to the Knowledge and Poſſeſſion of Truth and Good, is impoſſible at this Time. I ſhall therefore only remind you of ſome of the principal and moſt general Bleſſings vouchſafed by GOD to our Anceſtors and ourſelves: Such as in reſpect to Truth, converting this Nation to the Chriſtian Religion very betimes, and, as is probable, by one of the firſt and greateſt of the Chriſtian Apoſtles, St. *Paul*, who by a ſpecial Commiſſion, ſealed by the Miracle of his Converſion, was ſent by the *Gentiles* (for ye know that ye were *Gentiles*, carried away by dumb Idols, even as ye were led) *to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and inheritance among them that are ſanctified by faith that is in Chriſt.* Bleſſings of the higheſt Importance to Mankind, and which our Anceſtors, by their own early Converſion, had an Opportunity betimes of converting their Poſterity, and teaching them thoſe primitive Doctrines of Chriſt which they received from his own Apoſtle, that they might teach their Children the ſame; thereby ſucking Chriſtianity from the Fountain-Head before the Streams were polluted; in conſequence of which the pure Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, under the original Government of Epiſcopacy, was found in the moſt Weſtern Part of this Iſland, when St. *Auguſtine* was ſent hither to plant Chriſtianity among the Barbarians, who invaded and conquered the *Britains*; when

when the Ancient Inhabitants, who were forced to retire from their cruel Perſecutions into *Wales*, there retained the Chriſtian Religion in the primitive Purity, without any Dependance upon, or Corruptions from the uſurping Powers and Innovations of the Church of *Rome*. For which early Inſtruction in the Will, and ſaving Health of GOD, our conſtant Remembrance and devout Gratitude is due, and eſpecially our Obligation is the ſtronger to *fear and ſerve the Lord in Truth, and with all the Heart.*

As our Obligation ſtill riſes higher from a Senſe of our being reſtored to this primitive Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, when afterwards Popery had found its way to deceive and enſlave our Anceſtors, partly through the Unwarineſs and Indolence of Chriſtians here, and partly through the artful and beguiling Inſinuations of Jeſuitical Deceivers, who found Means to reduce them to the ſuperſtitious Idolatries and Hereſies of the Church of *Rome*, and thereby involv'd them almoſt in the ſame Ignorance, and more Guilt than belong'd to them in their *Pagan* State; when they eſpouſed *Pagan* Errors, and practiſed *Pagan* Abominations, as the Church of *Rome* at preſent does, under the clear Light and open Profeſſion of the Goſpel. From which degenerate State of Chriſtianity they were happily delivered at the PROTESTANT REFORMATION; which Reformation, conſidering the Power and Influence of the *Roman* Church here at that Time, and the ſtrong and general Prejudice of Education in its Favour, and that little Accident that gave the firſt Occaſion to it, on the one Hand, and the abundant Grace and divine Strength then exhibited in the publick Diſputes, and perſuaſive Writings, and conſtant patient Sufferings of our firſt pious Reformers, can only be imputed to an extraordinary Influence of the purifying Spirit and interpoſing Hand of GOD, for which our Forgetfulneſs would be a Sin of high Guilt, and our unreformed Lives the greateſt Reproach to the Reformation of our Faith, ſeeing that tho' through the Mercy

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of GOD we were reſtor'd to the Truth of our Religion, we are not yet reſtor'd to the Power of it.

BUT more eſpecially does our Obligation ariſe to ſerve and fear the LORD in Truth, in Conſideration of the Bleſſings, in reſpect to Religion, which we this Day commemorate in our Deliverance from the worſt Pollutions and Perſecution of this Church in the grand Rebellion: When ſome of our Companions and Partners in the bleſſed Privileges of the Reformation treacherouſly join'd with a Fanatical Crew of Enthuſiaſts and Independants, in an open and violent Aſſault upon this moſt Reformed Church, to the utter Ruin of it; and at a Time when it was confeſſed by foreign Proteſtants of all Denominations, to be the Bulwark of the Proteſtant Cauſe: When under the moſt hypocritical Pretence of a farther Reformation in it, they ſeized the publick Adminiſtration of it, changing ſome, and uſurping others of its original divine Powers; aboliſhing ſome, and prophaning others of its Scripture Ordinances, polluting its Divine Worſhip, perſecuting its faithful Miniſters with a malicious Cruelty, and dividing the Portion allotted them by the Laws of GOD and Man, for a Prey to themſelves. Thus changing the whole admirable Face of this Church, faſhion'd in the Beauty of Holineſs, into an odious Monſter, repreſenting Schiſm, Hereſy, Enthuſiaſm, Prophaneſs, Rebellion and Sacrilege. During which Time the pure Religion that was undefiled before GOD, and ſhone by the glorious Light of the Goſpel, was almoſt twelve Years under a Fanatical Eclipſe. But this Day brings to Remembrance, when ſhe emerged again in her Primitive Glory; when the real Defender of her Faith was happily reſtor'd to his Juſt Right, and his Inclination accompanied with an Ability, and an immediate Endeavour to aſſert and reſtore all her Rights, and to defend her againſt all her Enemies, foreign and domeſtick, for which our moſt joyful and dutiful Acknowledgements and Obedience will be always due to GOD.

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ESPECIALLY when we conſider this Bleſſing heightened to our Anceſtors and ourſelves, in the Deliverance of our two famous Univerſities on the ſame Day (that Day of general Goal-delivery of Truth and Juſtice) from the Fetters laid on their Hands and Mouths by the implacable Enemies of both; and which, like thoſe on the Hands of St. *Peter*, fell off of their own Accord, when their Natural, Rightful, and long deſir'd Sovereign, as an Angel of GOD, open'd their Priſon-Doors, and ſet them at Liberty to reſume their ſucceſsful Searches after all uſeful and beneficial Learning, under the utmoſt Encouragement from the Royal Favour: And particularly to reſume and to maintain their ancient Arguments for Loyalty and Primitive Chriſtianity, which, under the Conduct of GOD's Providence, were the perſuaſive Cauſe of the REFORMATION, and made theſe two Univerſities the Common Mother which by a *joint Labour* gave Birth to the Reformed Church of *England*; and theſe were the two ſweet Breaſts from which ſhe originally ſucked the ſincere Milk of GOD's Word with which ſhe now feeds her Children.

THESE are ſome of the *great Things* in reſpect of Truth and the right Way, which GOD hath done for this Nation in theſe things greatly bleſſed of the LORD. But leſt theſe ſhould be thought Bleſſings only to the Church, let us paſs on to conſider thoſe which the State received on this joyful Day. And in remembring theſe, the Members of the Church have an equal Joy and Privilege, as the State equally partakes in the Deliverances of the Church: For the Church and State, which are by Law eſtabliſh'd, are like undivided Twins which live and die together; and therefore they have a perfect and moſt natural Sympathy in the Proſperity and Adverſity of one another. This is that State which gave *legal* Birth and Nouriſhment to this Church, and defends it by the temporal Sword. And this is that Church which gave ſpiritual Birth and Nouriſhment to the State, and defends it by the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of GOD, from all ſpiritual Invaders,

Invaders, and therefore they ever mourn and rejoice together; when one is alarmed with any approaching Evil, the other is in Fear, and looks about to ward it off; and when one is crowned with any kind of publick Succeſs, the other is crowned with Joy: and it is a Truth acknowledged from long and conſtant Experience, that the beſt Members of the Church are the beſt Subjects of the State, and the beſt Patriots of the State are the beſt Friends of the Church.

Let us then caſt a joyful Eye upon the great Deliverance of the State from the Miſeries of the Great Rebellion; and *that our joy may be full*, let us reflect a little upon the Excellency of our Civil Conſtitution, which was this Day recovered from Anarchy and Confuſion.

And here, if any Civil Government is founded in real Truth, or poſſeſſed of real Good, this is ſo; ſince none is conducted more for the Good of the Governors, and the Governed, and the Glory of God than this, when the Laws of our Conſtitution take their free and natural Courſe: for here is a wiſe, and moſt deſirable Balance aſcertained and ſettled by Law between Power and Liberty, in a juſt Limitation of the Prerogative of the Crown, and the Priviledges of the People. A Balance deſirable in all Governments, but enjoyed only in ours. For as Princes are but Men, and Subjects have natural Rights flowing from the original Deſign of Government, and as Princes have natural ſovereign Rights inherent in Sovereignty, and Subjects are liable to Diſorder, ſo both ſhould be under ſome legal Reſtraints beſides the Reſtraints of Conſcience and Religion, for their mutual Happineſs. Subjects are naturally under the Reſtraint of the Law of their rightful Sovereign; but tho' Princes cannot be controuled by their Subjects without inverting the Order of Things, yet gracious Princes may limit their own Prerogative for the Improvement of Government, and tranſmit it, ſo limited, to their Royal Heirs and Succeſſors as a Bleſſing. And when a legal Stipu-

lation is made by the Prince to the People for ſuch Limitation, the People have a legal Right to it. And by this means a Balance may be adjuſted, and a Mean ſettled between arbitrary Power and Slavery.

But as no meer human Inſtitutions can be perfect, ſo there can be no perfect Balance, in this reſpect, ſettled by human Counſels, though a Prince ſhould be never ſo well inclined to eſtabliſh it. And ſeeing that this Balance muſt in ſome meaſure be uneven, it ſeems moſt reaſonable that the Sovereign, who is the natural Subject of Power, ſhould always have the turning of the Scale; that an Exceeding of Prerogative ſhould be on the Side of the Prince, rather than Exceſs of Liberty on the Side of the *People*; not only that Subjects might occaſionally exerciſe the *Chriſtian Duties* of *Paſſive Obedience*, according to the Commands and Examples of our Saviour and *his Apoſtles*, but alſo that Sovereigns might not exerciſe *Civil* Government like *Machines*, by *Neceſſity*; but might have the ſame *moral* Liberty of Governing *well* as the People have of Obeying *well*, *for Conſcience ſake*; and that *both* might be capable of thoſe *divine* Rewards ordained by God for *good* Governors and *good* Subjects.

Yet it is our peculiar Happineſs in our Conſtitution, that we have a more gracious and perfect Balance for the Limitation of Power and Liberty than any Government in the World. For as our Monarchs, to ſupport the Dignity of their Character, have all the deſirable Enſigns of *Majeſty* veſted in their Royal Perſons and Prerogatives, the Regalia, the Guards, the Soldiery, the Diſpoſition of Honours, and civil Truſt, and the general Execution of the Laws; ſo the *People*, as a prudent Counterpoiſe, are inveſted by Law both with a concurring and diſſenting Authority in our Legiſlature, and with the ſole Grant of the Money to give the ſeveral Royal Prerogatives their due Force, Efficacy and Luſtre. Indeed, by the Laws of God and Nations a juſt

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Tribute is due to the Sovereign from every Subject for the Dignity and neceſſary Occaſions of Government; and he will ever find it, and a chearful Giver in every true Member of our Church, who are diſtinguiſhed for their Love of *Monarchy* and *Loyalty*. Yet conſidering that both Kings and Queens are ſubject to moral Corruption as well as all the reſt of Mankind, and ſo ſubject to *Ambition* and *Avarice*, and when under the Influence of theſe Paſſions, are ſtrongly tempted to exerciſe a lawleſs and oppreſſive Sway, and *indiſcreetly* to impoveriſh their Subjects by *unneceſſary* Taxes; it may be deemed one of the moſt valuable Priviledges of the Subjects, and one of the wiſeſt Proviſions for good Government, that our People, in their Parliamentary Capacity, have not only a *defenſive* Power in our Legiſlature, by which they may ſtop any offenſive Bill from proceeding into a Law, but have alſo an unconteſted Right to deny all unneceſſary, and even inexpedient Supplies; eſpecially all ſuch as may be hurtful to our excellent Conſtitution.

Nor does our moſt Noble Houſe of Lords add any ſmall matter to the Beauty and Strength of this political Balance, by their Power to ſtop any Bill tending to weaken the Prerogative of the Crown, or diminiſh the Rights of the People. This Noble Houſe likewiſe ſerving to guard off a Democracy, the worſt in its ſelf of all Civil Governments, as the Obſervance of this Day will ever teach this Nation, and the moſt contrary to the Genius of the People, by keeping on foot that valuable Prerogative of the Crown, for creating its own Peers, to obviate any corrupt Harmony between the Lords and Commons, and to reward occaſionally thoſe moſt eminent and faithful Commoners who are moſt true to their King and Country.

Some perhaps may think the legiſlative Power of our Spiritual Lords the Biſhops of no neceſſary Service in our civil Conſtitution, and to be confounding

Things Spiritual with Things Temporal. But whoever will conſider, that our Clergy are natural Subjects as well as the Laity, and that they were ſubject to many, and now to almoſt all the Laws of the Laity; whoever alſo conſiders our Conſtitution to be of a mix'd Nature, partly religious and partly civil, the State having ſome juridical Share in the outward Adminiſtration of the Epiſcopal Church; and how far any ill, or miſtaken, Uſe of that Eccleſiaſtical Power by the State, may poſſibly affect the Church in her Spirituals, and obſtruct or diſcourage the free Profeſſion of true Chriſtianity among us: Whoever likewiſe conſiders all the Laity as *Chriſtians* as well as Subjects, whoſe religious Intereſt ſhould be conſulted as well as their temporal; and that for this they are under the common Care of our Biſhops with the Clergy: And, laſtly, whoſoever will conſider the preſumptive Capacity at leaſt of the Biſhops of our Church (who uſually are behind no Biſhops in the Chriſtian World for Learning, Piety, and Prudence) to adviſe in the State in all Matters of religious Government, can never think it an impolitick Reſpect to them, to call them into the Great Councils of the Nation, and to give them a Share with our Lay Rulers in the Civil Legiſlature, for the ſpiritual Defence and Advantage of the People. And as this has the Aſpect of being for the common Good of Laity and Clergy, and tends to preſerve true Religion among us, I hope the Right Reverend Fathers of the Church will never, as they were in the Great Rebellion, be voted uſeleſs in the State.

This is our preſent excellent Civil Conſtitution, and calls for the ſincere Affection and Zeal of every true *Engliſhman*, and good Subject, for its Preſervation.

And as to the Form of our Government taken together, it comes the neareſt of any other to that by which God governs the Univerſe and his Catholick Church; *viz.* a Trinity of Perſonages in an Unity of Majeſty. For as far as, keeping humble Diſtance, things human may

may be compared with Things divine, and Things finite with Things infinite, the *Three Eſtates of this Realm* moſt reſemble the THEOCRACY; each being *really* diſtinct from the other, and each *eſſential* to our Conſtitution, and all centring in a MONARCHY limited only by the divine Will, and regulated in its publick Adminiſtration by the divine Perfections; whilſt it profeſſes to govern us by the Obligations of the *Scriptures* and *Right Reaſon*, which jointly conſpire in the *Law* of UNIVERSAL RIGHTEOUSNESS, that *Law* which GOD is to *himſelf*, and which is the Rule of his *Univerſal Government* in the Great Kingdom of his PROVIDENCE. This being the true Nature of our Conſtitution, other Nations may well be provoked to *envy* us, as they do, and to ſay in their Hearts at leaſt, *This is a great nation; this is a wiſe and underſtanding people. Bleſſed are the people that are in ſuch a caſe; yea*, indeed, *bleſſed are we who* in this manner *have the* LORD *for our* GOD! which ſhould provoke us, in thoſe pathetick Words of King *David*, ſpoken of the peculiar City of GOD, to ſay one to another, in reſpect of this our *Jeruſalem*, *O pray for the peace of Jeruſalem, they ſhall proſper that love thee; peace be within thy walls, and plenteouſneſs within thy palaces, for my brethren and companions ſake I will wiſh thee now proſperity; yea, becauſe of the houſe of the* LORD *our* GOD, *I will ſeek to do thee good*; and moſt of all ſhould provoke us *to fear the* LORD, *and to ſerve him with all our heart*, conſidering *how great things he hath done for us*, in bleſſing us with ſuch a Conſtitution, in reſtoring it again to us, when it was *utterly loſt*, and in preſerving it to *this day*.

AND this we ſhall think ourſelves much more obliged, and be more heartily inclined to do, when we have reflected a little upon the miſerable State of our Anceſtors at the Great Rebellion.

It will not, I own, become the joyous Aſpect of this bleſſed Day to draw too great a Gloom upon it, by a full Conſideration of the manifold and piercing Troubles this Nation then ſuffered. I ſhall therefore draw only ſuch a Shade from them, as may render the Senſe of our Deliverance more pleaſing, without making it frightful: and yet in regard to the Prophet's ſecond Motive for fearing the Lord, and ſerving him, it ought to be made ſo frightful as to deter us from *ſtill doing wickedly, leſt we be conſumed, both we and our king.*

It is juſtly acknowledged by a ſolemn national penitential Confeſſion yearly, that the Sins of the Nation drew down that heavy Judgment upon it. And, indeed, whoever conſiders thoſe Times as handed down to us in Hiſtory, will find that a general Spirit of Irreligion then prevailed, which by degrees brought on that general Spirit of Rebellion which involved the whole Nation in Miſery: For when the firſt Seeds of it were ſcattered about by the Republican Faction, and appeared to ſpring into unreaſonable Clamours and Diſcontentment againſt the mildeſt and moſt religious King then in the World, they ſoon grew up into armed Men, and united into a formidable Army, which was not afraid to diſobey the King and his Laws, nor to inſult him, nor to ſpit in his Face, nor to ſtrip him of all his Kingly Power, nor to take away his Life in the open Street, and before his Palace-Gate. And having killed the King, they took Poſſeſſion, and with great Precipitation thus voted the Conſtitution down.

By voting Monarchy unneceſſary, burdenſome, and dangerous, then voting the Houſe of Lords uſeleſs, and dangerous; after they had firſt voted the Biſhops out of it, and incapable of being in the Commiſſion of Peace; then turning their own Voters out of the Houſe of Commons by Violence for diſobeying the Inclination and Orders of the Army. And as to our Church, they voted down the Pillars upon which it ſtood and flouriſhed, *i. e.* Epiſcopacy, our Common-Prayer, the Creed, the Lord's

Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. In this irreligious Condition, what could be expected, but that Anarchy, and Confusion, and Oppression which follow'd! for now their chief Leaders did not know what to do; sometimes they thought best to govern the People by that sanctified Remnant of the dispersed Parliament, sometimes by a more sanctified Council of State, and sometimes by the Saint General and his Officers, whose Banners were filled with Scripture. And these interchangeably ruled as the Spirit of Usurpation prevailed in them. But which Side soever seemed uppermost, it was plain enough that the Army ruled all. And what must be the Effects of a military Government every body may guess, and it will be hard to guess worse than it then happened.

For now who knew what Laws were in Force? and who dared to plead those that were? Private Subjects knew not to which to have recourse to redress their private Complaints against each other. For every body's Possessions were now grown precarious, and subject to Rapine by the Hands of one another. No Man's House was any longer his Castle, nor safe Retreat; no Man's Shop was his own Store-house, but House and Shop subject to be entered and searched by the Commission of irresistible Power, as if all were *Excise-men*, saving in this Comparison for the Legality of these *Civil* Officers Proceedings. The Enemies of many were those of their own House; for *Relations* met sometimes to encounter, seize, and destroy each other; and *Friends*, who in the general Hurry were casually enlisted into Armies of opposite Command, were either obliged to kill one the other, or by the inexorable martial Law to *die* for their *friendly* Disobedience. In this lamentable Case the Nation was involved, and seemed literally to suffer the Judgments threatened by God upon the sinful *Jews*, described by the Prophet in these Words; *The daughter of Zion bewailed herself, and spread out her hands, saying,*

woe

woe is me becauſe of the murderers! How long ſhall I ſee the ſtandard, and hear the ſound of the trumpet! O go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way, for the ſword of the enemy and fear is on every ſide! Then deſtruction upon deſtruction was cried; then did GOD *deliver the ſtrength of this city, and the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treaſures of the kings of Judah, into the hand of our enemies.* Then did this *Church* partake in the Fate of the *State*; for then did GOD *forſake his houſe, and left his heritage, and gave the dearly beloved of his ſoul into the hands of its enemies.* Then did GOD *vex us in his ſore diſpleaſure*; then did he *conſume both us and our king.*

To be delivered in this *Extremity* of Diſtreſs was a Bleſſing beyond the reach of *Hope.* To be delivered nevertheleſs in ſo compleat, in ſo ſudden, and in ſo peaceable a manner, when things changed as if they had never been diſplaced, and fell again of their own Accord from the *greateſt Confuſion* into their *old Order*, was moſt ſurprizing! This moſt certainly *was the Lord's doing, and it was ſo marvellous in the eyes* of our Anceſtors, *that they were like unto them that dream*; and when they could recover themſelves, *then was their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with joy:* And every body's Song then was, *The* LORD *hath done great things for us, yea, the* LORD *hath done great things for us* ALREADY, *whereof we rejoice.* And we their Poſterity who partake fully in the Bleſſing, have Reaſon to ſay, in reſpect of this Thankſgiving, upon that Occaſion, *This is the day which the* LORD *hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.* Which brings me,

LASTLY, To draw two or three Inferences, and ſo conclude.

FIRST, We may here infer the HOLINESS, JUSTICE, and MERCY of Providence. His Holineſs in appointing the Religious Conduct of a Nation, the Condition of his Favour towards it; his Juſtice in inflicting Puniſhment

niſhment upon it according to its Wickedneſs, and his Mercy in ſparing it for its Repentance. This has been his Conduct from the Beginning, and appears firſt in a more viſible and ſpecial manner in the Caſe of his own People, whilſt they were under the immediate Adminiſtration of a Theoracy; whoſe Covenant with them was, *If ye will obey my voice, and hearken unto my commandments to do them, I will be your* GOD, *and ye ſhall be my people, and I will love you and bleſs you.* But *curſed is every Man, i. e.* the whole Nation in its ſociate Capacity, *that obeyeth not the words of this covenant.* And to encourage their Repentance when their Wickedneſs had laid them under the Chaſtiſement of the LORD, he ſays, *If my people which are called by my name ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from all their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their ſin, and will heal their nation.* And as it was promiſed and threatned ſo it came to paſs, for when they were exemplary in their Obedience to GOD, they were made to *overcome their enemies*, to *poſſeſs houſes full of good things, and they did eat and were filled, and delighted themſelves in the divine goodneſs.* But when they generally revolted, GOD *gave them over to their enemies; and curſing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that they put their hand to, fell upon them. Nevertheleſs, in the time of their* penitential *trouble, when they cried he heard them, and according to his manifold mercies he gave them a Saviour who ſaved them from the hands of their enemies.* And this has been the conſtant Conduct of Providence towards all Nations; for as the *righteous* LORD *loveth righteouſneſs, ſo in every nation he that worketh righteouſneſs is accepted with him*, and as the general *kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governour among the nations*, ſo he *judges the folk righteouſly, and governs the nations upon earth.* And as Nations and all particular incorporated Societies of

Men end with this World, ſo they can be, and are only rewarded and puniſhed as ſuch in this World. And if GOD any time ſeems to ſuſpend his Judgment from a ſinful Nation, it is either that the *riches of his goodneſs in his forbearance and long ſuffering may bring them to repentance*, or that they are not yet ripe for a general Judgment; or elſe the good People which are amongſt them, who muſt needs be involved in a general Calamity, are the Cauſe of a farther ſuſpenſion, GOD ſometimes being willing to ſpare a City if there be *fifty* righteous, nay, peradventure there be *ten* found in it.

HENCE, Secondly, may be inferr'd, that it *equally* concerns all Nations *to fear the* LORD, *and ſerve him in truth with all the heart.* For all Nations are not only alike ſubject to him, but equally dependant upon him, for the *Grant*, *Preſervation*, and *Continuance* of their national Privileges, and ſo *equally* obliged to obey the Laws he hath ſet before them; for tho' the ſame numerical Laws, no not of *moral* Righteouſneſs, are not ſet before all Nations, he giving ſome *greater*, and ſome *leſſer* Knowledge of *theſe Laws*, according to his good Pleaſure, from whence ariſes the different Obligations of Mankind, yet he expecteth from each Nation according to the publick Talent deliver'd to each, and the Means and Opportunity they have to improve it.

HENCE, *Thirdly*, we plainly may infer the greatneſs of our own publick Obligation to *fear the* LORD, *and to ſerve him in truth*, ſeeing that it may juſtly be expoſtulated with us, *For what nation hath ſtatutes and judgments ſo righteous as all thoſe I have laid before you this day?* And ſeeing we have ſuch Helps and Motives to Obedience from the *Rewards* and *Grace* given us as Chriſtians, and ſeeing ourſelves in the midſt of ſuch an abundance of Bleſſings *ſpiritual* and *temporal*,

ral, and guarded and preſerved by ſo many *eminent* Inſtances of GOD's *watchful* and *ſaving* Providence; ſo that we ſhall be the moſt ungrateful and ſinful People upon Earth, if by our joint Endeavours in the Ways of the Chriſtian Life we do not cauſe our *national* Righteouſneſs, Piety, and good Works, to bear a Proportion to the *great things he hath done for us.*

HENCE in particular the Sovereigns of this bleſſed Nation may ſee the *Prudence*, the *Felicity*, and the *Honour* of governing themſelves and their People by RELIGION; how it reflects double Luſtre upon Majeſty, when they repreſent the divine Holineſs as well as the divine Power, and follow thoſe Reſolutions of holy King *David* in their Royal Conduct, *I will not know a wicked perſon; whoſo leadeth a godly life, he ſhall be my ſervant, and he that telleth lies ſhall not tarry in my ſight*, becauſe every *wiſe king ſcattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.* How this would enable them in the beſt manner to ſecure and enjoy their Dominions; for *the throne is eſtabliſhed by righteouſneſs:* How it would even extend their Dominion, and fortify their Guard, by ſetting up a *Throne* in the *Heart* of each Subject, to which *each* would pay a *chearful* Duty. For nothing is ſo endearing to the *good Part* of the Subjects as *univerſal Goodneſs* in their SOVEREIGN; and nothing is ſo *ſoftning* to *bad ones*; for the *Goodneſs* of a *King*, like that of GOD, whom he immediately repreſents, *leadeth to repentance.* Hence they may alſo learn the high Aggravations of Guilt, and the ſpecial *Abomination it is for Kings to do*, or to connive at *wickedneſs.* Conſidering, that GOD *is a king among princes*, that he can *reſtrain the ſpirit of princes*; that *he leadeth princes away ſpoiled*; that he is a King over all the Children of Pride; *that he changeth the times*, and *removeth and ſetteth up kings.* That *no king can be ſa-*

ved by the multitude of an hoſt; that *wiſdom is better than ſtrength*; that *the way of the* LORD *is ſtrength*; that *he poureth contempt upon* (bad) *princes*, and that he hath inſtructed his Prophet to admoniſh all ſuch in theſe Words, *Say unto the king, and to the queen, humble your ſelves, ſit down, for your principalities ſhall come down, even the crown in which ye glory*; * *for they have not ſerved thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodneſs which thou gaveſt them, and in the large and fat land which thou gaveſt before them* †.

HENCE our noble and honourable SENATORS may learn the *true Political Wiſdom*, by pointing all their Views, Counſels, and Acts, to the Advancement of GOD's Glory, the Good of his Church, the Safety, Honour, and Welfare of the Sovereign and his Kingdoms; and whenever they ſhall perceive a *Confederacy* of ill Men forming themſelves againſt the LORD and his ANOINTED, and the *People* of the LORD, and forgetting their publick Duty, and endeavouring only in the *ways of corruption* to enrich themſelves, and *ſtrengthen themſelves in their wickedneſs*; how much it will then concern thoſe that are *faithful in the* LORD zealouſly to *oppoſe* them? And if ever *iniquity ſhould ſo far abound*, that they neither by *legal* Numbers, nor *faithful* Counſels, ſhall be able to *over-rule* and *prevent* their evil Meaſures, then with Hearts full of the *fear of the* LORD, and of *Loyalty* and *publick Spirit*, let them ſeparate themſelves from ſuch Enemies to GOD and *Men*, and each ſay to his Soul, *O my ſoul, come not thou into their ſecret, unto their aſſemblies, mine honour, be not thou united*; and let them even diſtinguiſh themſelves by the *juſt* Regard to their *Soul*, and to their *Honour*, as never to *betray* the Cauſe of GOD and *Virtue* for the ſinful Reward of a *Bribe*, nor to admit,

* Jerem. xiii. 18. † Nehem. ix. 35.

as

as a *Fetter* upon their *Integrity* the *mean* Temptation of a *Stipend*. And let ſuch *faithful* PATRIOTS, if even they ſhould ſuffer the *Loſs* of any Worldly *Honour* or *Profit*, by means of their *Fidelity*, be ſolaced with the Conſolation of their partaking in the high Reputation of *Moſes*, that eminent Servant and Prophet of GOD, *in chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of* GOD, *than to enjoy*, in Pharaoh's Court, *the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.*

HENCE our holy Fathers of the Church, our Biſhops, may ſee the ſtricteſt Obligation upon them, when they *ſit in the Congregation of Princes*, to give no Counſel but what is *from the* LORD; to abide conſtantly by that excellent Rule of the Prophet *Balaam*, *the word that* GOD *putteth in my mouth, that will I ſpeak*; eſpecially to imitate him in that glorious *ſelf-denying* Reſolution, *If Balak* (the King) *would give me his houſe full of ſilver and gold I cannot go beyond the word of the* LORD *my* GOD, *to do leſs or more*; conſidering what a Debaſement it would be to their *ſupreme* Order in the *Church* to proſtitute their *ſpiritual* Thrones to do any of the *mean* Drudgery and *ſinful* Services of *temporal* ones.

HENCE our Judges in all Ages may learn to arrive at the moſt amiable Character of the *upright Job*, by *putting on*, after his Example, *righteouſneſs as their clothing*, and *judgment as a* ROBE and DIADEM; the Conſequence of which was to JOB, *when the ear heard him, it bleſſed him.* And conſidering that theſe *awful* Magiſtrates ſit to declare the *Judgment of* GOD, it would be the worſt Abuſe of their *Truſt*, and the greateſt Forfeiture of their *Honour*, for them ever to receive either the Matter of their Charge, or the Meaſures of their Juſtice, from the depraved Inclination and Dictates of any corrupt and irreligious Court, or of any howſoever great Benefactor.

HENCE

HENCE our Clergy of the inferior Claſs, to whoſe daily Labours and religious Care the Souls of the People of this Land are immediately committed, may learn at all times to diſcharge their divine Truſt with the utmoſt Fidelity, and never to handle the Word of GOD deceitfully, but *as of ſincerity, but as of* GOD, *in the ſight of* GOD *, conſtantly to ſpeak the Truth, boldly to rebuke Vice, and though never deſirous, yet always reſign'd, meekly to ſuffer for the Truth ſake, and maugre all Diſcouragements of this World, and in Denial of all Worldly Temptations and Allurements, ſo to *take heed to themſelves, and to their doctrines, that they may ſave their own ſouls, and theirs that hear them.*

HENCE our Magiſtrates of the inferior Order may learn with *Zeal*, though not with *Power*, *equal* to our ſuperior Judges, truly and indifferently to miniſter Juſtice, to the Puniſhment of Wickedneſs and Vice, and to the Maintenance of GOD's true Religion among us.

HENCE our military Commanders and Officers, of whatever Denomination, may learn to keep themſelves, and thoſe under their reſpective Commands, in Obedience to the *Civil Power* and the *Laws of* GOD. And as they are commendably diſtinguiſhed for their *Honour*, may never forfeit *that Honour* by receiving *Pay*, nor by uſing *Force* againſt their *King*, nor againſt their *Country*.

HENCE our Merchants, many of whom, like thoſe of *Tyre*, may be compared, without Offence, to ſome *Princes* for the Splendor of their Condition, for the Greatneſs of their Fortunes, and for the Civility of their Manners, may always learn, by a fair Commerce, *to render to all their due, to pay tribute where*

* 2 Cor. ij. 17.

tribute

tribute is due, cuſtom to whom cuſtom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

HENCE this moſt renowned City, to which the Character of *Tyre*, in reſpect of Commerce, literally belongs, *whoſe traffickers are the honourable of the earth*, and *the harveſt of the river is her revenue*, and *ſhe is a mart of nations*, may learn by the religious Privileges which ſhe enjoys above *Tyre*, or any City in the World, to be as renowned for her *Piety*, and *Virtue*, and *good Works*, as ſhe is for her *Riches* and *Splendor*.

HENCE all the private Subjects of this Nation, who move in no Sphere of publick Power, may learn to *ſtudy to be quiet, and to do their own buſineſs, to lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godlineſs and honeſty*, to *fear* GOD, and to *do his prophets no harm*, to *reverence his prieſts* (*whoſe mouths preſerve knowledge*) *and give them their portion*; and, in a Word, to honour, adorn, and defend this happy Conſtitution in Church and State, to *fear* GOD *and the King, and not meddle with them that are given to change.*

THEN may we all, *from the King on his Throne to the Poor on the Dunghill*, put our Truſt in the LORD our GOD, and in the Mercy of the moſt High, we ſhall none of us miſcarry.

To conclude; Having every one of us fully conſidered how GREAT THINGS GOD hath done for us, *let us fear the* LORD, *and ſerve him in truth with all our heart*; let us rejoice together with an innocent and pious Mirth for the Bleſſings of the Day; and *let us* ALL *ſtand up and bleſs the* LORD *our* GOD *for ever and ever*; *and bleſſed be his glorious name, which is exalted far above bleſſing and praiſe.* AMEN.

FINIS.

Lately publiſhed,

THE Sacred Authority of Chriſtian Biſhops, and the Piety of Praying for them in Priſon. A Sermon preached at *Rocheſter* Cathedral, on Occaſion of the Impriſonment of Dr. ATTERBURY, late Biſhop of *Rocheſter*.

A Sermon preached at *Hertford*-School Feaſt.

A Sermon preached at the opening of *Dartford*-Work-houſe.

Theſe three by *Charles Chambres*, M. A. Vicar of *Dartford*, *Kent*.

Printed for *Tho. Aſtley*, at the *Roſe*, over againſt the North-Door of St. *Paul*'s.

CHRISTIANITY

Distinct from the

Religion of *Nature*,

In ANSWER

To a late Book, Entitled,

Christianity as Old as the Creation, &c.

PART. I.

Being an Examination of the Author's *General Hypothesis*, that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion differ only in the manner of their being communicated.*

By THOMAS BROUGHTON, A. M.
Reader at the Temple-Church.

LONDON:

Printed for WEAVER BICKERTON at Lord *Bacon's* Head, the Corner of *Palsgrave-Head-Court*, without *Temple-Bar*, 1732.

PREFACE.

THE *Ingenious Author, whoſe elaborate Performance I have undertaken to examine, pretends to have diſcover'd the true and only* Secret *of* Reconciling Natural and Reveal'd Religion: *A Secret truly* Such *hitherto; and for which the Chriſtian World is ſolely indebted to the happy Genius and Penetration of this Author. Indeed, when we conſider how natural and eaſy an* Hypotheſis *this Gentleman has luckily hit upon, it may ſeem a little Strange, that it ſhou'd ſo long have eſcap'd the ſagacity and diligence of the learneded Chriſtian Writers. But the Glory of it was due by Fate to the* Preſent Age, *and the particular Honour of the Diſcovery reſerv'd for the Ingenious Author of* Chriſtianity as Old as the Creation, *&c.*

Had the Learned Apologiſts *for the* Chriſtian Religion *been acquainted with this* modern Hypotheſis, *what an infinite deal of Trouble wou'd it have ſav'd them? How ſuperfluous now appear all their Labours; how unneceſſary the Pains they took in vindicating the* particular *Doctrines and Precepts of this Religion, by ſhewing their conformity and agreement with the unprejudic'd Dictates of Right Reaſon? Had they dreamt of our Author's* Scheme, *they might have thrown by their Pens, and only reply'd to their Adverſaries, that* Chriſtianity *was but* Another Name for the Religion of Nature, *and the buſineſs had been done; nor need they have Spent their time, and their oil, in proving the* Sun *to be* as bright as the Sun, *or* Snow as white as Snow. *But they were fooliſhly taught to think there was ſomething* more *in the* Religion of Jeſus, *than in* That *of* Meer Nature.

Notwithſtanding the many excellent Apologies *for the* Reaſonableneſs *of* Chriſtianity, *This Gentleman is confident, that the receiv'd Notions concerning it tend to deſtroy that* Harmony, *which ought to ſubſiſt between* It, *and the* Religion of Nature; *and therefore, prompted by Zeal for the Honour of Religion, and griev'd, that two ſuch good Friends ſhou'd differ,*

he

he kindly interpoſes for their mutual Reconciliation. *But*

— Aliquis latet Error, Equo ne credite Teucri.

There have been many Attempts of late to deſtroy the Credit of the Chriſtian Revelation. *To effect this, the Authors have generally levell'd their Arguments againſt the* Evidence *of it : A Method of Attack, which requires the* Infidel *to be a Man of great Reading, and well vers'd in* Antiquity. *If the Attack be made on the* Prophecies *of the* Old Teſtament, *ſaid to be accompliſh'd in the perſon of* Chriſt ; *the Author muſt be equipp'd with a large ſhare of* Hiſtorical *and* Critical Learning. *To overthrow the Credit of our Saviour's* Miracles, *he muſt miſapply the* Allegorical Interpretations *of the* Fathers ; *and conſequently muſt have read 'em. Our Author's Oppoſition is carry'd on at a much eaſier rate, and at little or no expence of Learning. It cuts the Controverſy between the Patrons of* Chriſtianity *and* Deiſm *extreamly ſhort. To what purpoſe ſhou'd you diſpute whether the* Chriſtian Religion *be a* true *Religion, if it be an* Uſeleſs *one ? Admit but its* Inſignificancy ; *and any controverſy about the* Authority

thority *of the* Evangelical Writings *is of leſs importance, if poſſible, than the famous one between a* great Critick, *and a* great Wit, *about the* Genuineneſs *of* Phalaris's Epiſtles.

If this Author's Scheme *be juſtly founded, what becomes of the boaſted* Advantages *of* Chriſtianity *above the* Religion of Nature? *In vain may ſhe plead, that ſhe has inſtructed us in the* True Worſhip *of the* Supream Being, *from which Mankind (even the* Politeſt Nations) *had univerſally departed: that ſhe has brought* Life and Immortality to Light, *by giving us a full aſſurance of a* Future State, *concerning which the* Learnedeſt Heathens *confeſs'd their doubts: that ſhe has aſſur'd the* Sinner *of (what he cou'd never be certain of from the* Light of Nature) *not only* Pardon *and* Impunity, *but even of* Favour *and Eternal Happineſs, upon the eaſy terms of* Repentance: *that ſhe has given the World a* compleat and uniform Syſtem *of* Morality, *which, till then, lay ſcatter'd in the endleſs Writings of a* croud *of* Philoſophers; *attended with* Difficulties, Uncertainties, *and even* Contradictions: *and, laſtly, that ſhe has encourag'd and promoted the practice of virtue and goodneſs*

neſs by ſtronger Obligations, *by* nobler *and* better Motives, *and by ſuch* Duties *of a* Poſitive *Nature, as evidently tend more effectually to ſecure the Intereſts of* True Religion *in the world. All theſe, and many other, Advantages ſhe may now boaſt in vain. If this Author's* Scheme *takes place, ſhe muſt be contented for the future to ſtand upon the footing of* meer Natural Religion, *if not to give way to it, as the better and more Perfect Syſtem of the Two.*

When we conſider how eaſy and compendious *an* Hypotheſis *That of our Author's is, one wou'd think it might lye in the compaſs of a few Sheets, and be compriz'd, at moſt, in a* Shilling Pamphlet: *inſtead of which, out comes a* thick Quarto, *cloſely printed, in a ſmall Letter. He makes his Attack, not like a* light-arm'd Parthian, *with a Sling only, or a Bow; but* Goliah-like; *as if he thought by the* weight *and* bulk *of his armour to bear down Chriſtianity, in ſpite of the Strongeſt Oppoſition. And yet, arm'd as this* Champion *is at preſent, he is but* half equipp'd; *for we are threatned with* Volume the Second; *Which, from the practice of all Authors, Antient and Modern, I preſume will not be inferior, in bulk and ſize, to this he*

has

has already favour'd the world with. And yet I will venture to aſſure the Reader, that the Subſtance of this formidable *work might be drawn up even in a leſs compaſs, than what I have mention'd.*

If any one, who has not read our Author's performance, is curious to know by what arts he has ſwell'd ſo brief *an* Hypotheſis *to ſo* large *a ſize; He has done it, firſt, by expreſſing the ſame Propoſition in a great* variety *of Language; for, to do him juſtice, he is a dextrous* maſter *of the* noble Science *of* Tautology: *next, by many and long* Quotations *from our moſt eminent* Engliſh Divines, *and others; whoſe ſentiments concerning the Excellency and Perfection of Natural Religion he has endeavour'd to accommodate to his own Syſtem; ſo that were you only to turn over the Leaves, and obſerve the* great Names *cited in the* Margin, *you wou'd imagine, that* Tillotſon, Locke, Barrow, Stanhope, Sherlock, *&c. were all of the ſame Sentiments with the Ingenious Dr.* T—l: *in the next place, by a long detail of the ſad conſequences, and extream miſchiefs, of* Bigotry, Prieſtcraft, *and* Superſtition; *in which, it muſt be confeſs'd, he has laid out a great deal of* Rhetorick, *and*

Reading:

Reading: *and laſtly by numberleſs* miſapplications *and* miſinterpretations *of Scripture.*

But there is one Beauty *in his manner of treating the ſubject, which I cannot help taking notice of, and that is* The Dialogue. " *This (he tells us in his* " Preface) *was by the Antients eſteem'd* " *the moſt proper, as well as prudent,* " *Way of expoſing prevailing Abſurdi-* " *ties*; *and* Tully's *two Books* De Na- " tura Deorum, *and* De Divinatione, " *both levell'd againſt the ſuperſtition of* " *his country-men, are living monuments* " *of the uſefulneſs and expediency of this* " *manner of writing.*" *I entirely agree with him in his approbation of this manner of writing. But how has he copied theſe* excellent Originals? *In* Cicero's *Pieces the Perſons of the Dialogue are all allow'd fair Play. Whatever can be pleaded on either ſide of the Queſtion is fairly produc'd.* Tully's *own Sentiments are generally diſſembled, whilſt he holds the Balance with an impartial hand between the* Stoick, *the* Academick, *and the* Epicurean. *But How different is our Author's Conduct? The Perſons of* his Dialogue *are* A. *and* B.— A. *is the* little-Hero *of the Argument*; *and poor* B. *is only introduc'd, to give the* doughty Diſputant *an Opportunity of exulting in*

the ſuperiority of his underſtanding. Whatever he ſays is very little to the purpoſe: he even fancies Difficulties, *where there are none. Thus the One ſubmits before he is confuted, and the Other* triumphs without a victory. *This* Artifice *of our Author's puts me in mind of the* awkward Excuſe, *which* Bayes, *in* the Rehearſal, *makes for the* fillineſs *and* impertinence *of one of his* Characters, *which was, that* he underwrit that part on purpoſe to ſet off the reſt.

I might obſerve, likewiſe, an Impropriety *(not to ſay a* contradiction) *in the very* Title of his Book. *For if the* Goſpel *be but* a Republication of the Law of Nature, *how can* Chriſtianity be as old as the Creation; *unleſs the* Republication *of a* Law *can be as old as* the Law itſelf? *Suppoſe the* Subſtance *of a* Law, *made in the Reign of* Harry the eighth, *be* re-enacted *in That of* George the Second, *wou'd it be proper, or even true, to ſay, that the* latter *Act of Parliament bears the* ſame date *with the former, becauſe the* Subſtance *of them both is* the ſame? — *Is the late* Dr. Clarke's new Edition of Homer as old *as the* Poem itſelf? *I deſign not to quarel with him for a meer* Inaccuracy, *or* Impropriety *of Expreſſion, ſince his meaning is plain enough. My rea-*

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ſon for this Remark is, becauſe he has evidently borrowed the Title *of his Book from the preſent* Biſhop of Bangor's Sermon before the Societies for the Propagation of the Goſpel. *(vid. Chriſt. as old,* &c. *p. 79.) But, ſurely, it is one thing to ſay, with his Lordſhip, that* The Goſpel *(or* Chriſtianity) is DECLARATIVE *of* THAT RELIGION, WHICH was as old as the Creation; *and another, to ſay, with our Author, that* Chriſtianity, ITSELF is as old as the Creation.

Before I finiſh my Preface, *it may be proper to acquaint the Reader with the Method I intend to purſue, in anſwering the Author of* Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, *&c. Tho' the Objections, which he has ſtarted againſt the* Chriſtian Revelation, *be what he had* Principally *in view, as the true End and Deſign of his Scheme; yet, to ſet out with an* immediate Reply *to* thoſe Objections *is, I apprehend, to begin at the wrong end of the Controverſy; ſince, if he can but eſtabliſh his* General Hypotheſis, *that* Natural *and* Reveal'd Religion differ only in the manner of their being communicated, *Chriſtianity muſt fall of courſe, as will appear, when we come to conſider the neceſſary conſequences of it. It is, therefore, the Buſineſs of this* firſt Part, *with which I now preſent*

the Reader, to cut off this Retreat, this Dernier Reſort, *and to deſtroy the very Foundation, upon which All his Arguments againſt the Expediency and Uſe of* Divine Revelation *are founded: and that, by ſtating the* true Notion *of the* Perfection *of* Natural Religion *(the grand ſupport of our Author's* Hypotheſis) *in ſuch a manner, as to avoid the two Extreams of Aſſerting, with* Him, Natural Religion *to be* Abſolutely Perfect; *with* others, *to be Abſolutely* Imperfect; *and to leave Room for God Almighty to give his Creatures* Occaſional Laws, *as their Wants and Exigencies may require. The Reader will likewiſe here ſee the* true foundation, *upon which alone the* Expediency *of* Revelation *can be built.*

In my next Part I propoſe to conſider the other Branch of this Author's Scheme; which is, that No Poſitive Precepts can be a Part either of Natural or Reveal'd Religion: *A Point, which, in his opinion, can alone decide the Queſtion,* Whether Natural and Reveal'd Religion do really differ.

When this is done, it will be, then, *proper to anſwer this Author's moſt* material Objections *to the Credit and Authority of* Revelation in general, *and* The Chriſtian in particular.

THAT

HAT it is the *real* Deſign of the Author of *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, &c. to ſet aſide the *Goſpel Revelation*, not only as *uſeleſs*, but even *prejudicial*, to mankind, is very plain, notwithſtanding his repeated profeſſions to the contrary, from the very different Lights, in which he has ſeverally plac'd *Natural* and *Reveal'd Religion*. The former he every where deſcribes as *abſolutely ſufficient*, alike at *all times*, for all the purpoſes of Human *Happineſs*, and, among others, beſtows on it this glorious Encomium, that " If the higheſt inter-
" nal Excellence, the greateſt Plainneſs
" and Simplicity, Unanimity, Univerſa-
" lity, and Antiquity, nay Eternity, can
" recommend a Law; all theſe do, in

« an eminent degree, belong to the « Law of Nature; a Law, which does « not depend on the uncertain meaning « of Words and Phraſes in dead Lan- « guages, much leſs on Types, Meta- « phors, Allegories, and Parables; or « on the skill, or honeſty, of weak, or « deſigning, Tranſcribers (not to men- « tion Tranſlators) but on the immuta- « ble Relations of Things, always vi- « ſible to the whole World: " (*p.* 64.) whereas *Revelation*, beſides that it is encumber'd with all the abovemention'd Difficulties and Uncertainties, from which the *Law of Nature* is free, is repreſented, as frequently contradicting the Nature and Reaſon of Things; as being of doubtful and uncertain Evidence; as Partial and Ineffectual to the Purpoſes, for which it was given; and as having been actually the Cauſe of Infinite Inconveniencies and miſchiefs to mankind.

It is true, our Author does not openly avow this *hoſtile* deſign againſt the Chriſtian Revelation: on the Contrary, *His* is the moſt *Healing* Scheme imaginable; is calculated " greately to ad- « vance the Honour of *External* Reve- « lation, by ſhewing the perfect Agree- « ment between *That* and *Internal* Re- « velation;

" velation; and, by ſo doing, deſtroys " one of the moſt ſucceſsful Attempts, " that has been made on Religion, by " ſetting the Laws of God at variance." (*p.* 8.) And it muſt be confeſs'd, to the Honour of this Gentleman's Scheme, that He has luckily hit upon a moſt infallible method of *Reconciling* Natural and Reveal'd Religion, and that is, by making 'em both, *in all reſpects*, exactly *the Same*; and *Chriſtianity* muſt for the future moſt unnaturally quarrel with *Itſelf*, if it is any longer *at variance* with the *Law of Nature.*

But the Truth is, He pays Revelation but an aukward Compliment; and the mask of pretended Friendſhip is too thin a diſguiſe to cover and conceal the Real Foe. He treats *Revelation* juſt as *Epicurus* did the *Gods*; of whom it was obſerv'd, that, *tho' in words he acknowledg'd a Deity, yet in reality and effect, he denied his Exiſtence* *; and, as that old *Philoſopher*, by excluding the *Providence* of the Gods from the Government of Human Affairs, did, to all the purpoſes of Religion, deſtroy their Exiſtence, and conſequentially eſta-

* Epicurum verbis reliquiſſe Deos, re ſuſtuliſſe. *Cic. de Nat. Deorum. lib.* 2.

bliſh downright *Atheiſm*; Our Author, by making *Revelation* of *no Uſe* or Advantage to the World, does as effectually take away its *Reality*, and by neceſſary conſequence muſt recur to abſolute *Deiſm*.

To evince the Juſtice of this Charge, we ſhall not at preſent appeal to his particular Treatment of the *Chriſtian Revelation*. His Objections to the *Goſpel Scheme* are but the Sallies and Excurſions of an Enemy from his Head Quarters, and intended to illuſtrate and exemplify his *General Hypotheſis*; which being deſign'd to ſtrike at *all poſſible Revelation*, is an Argument, *a priori*, againſt That *particular One* of the Goſpel.

For I deſire it may be conſider'd, whether to aſſert, that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion* cannot poſſibly *differ* but *in the manner of their being communicated*, be not greatly to *leſſen*, if not entirely *deſtroy*, all Uſe and Expediency of the latter. For is it not directly to affirm, that *Reveal'd Religion* can teach us nothing, but what *Natural Religion* had *ſufficiently* inſtructed us in before; or, in other words, that it is inconſiſtent with the Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, to make *any* diſcovery of his

his Will to mankind, by *expreſs Revelation*, to which his own unaſſiſted *Reaſon* cou'd not *as well* have led him without it?

If *Natural Reaſon* alone be, at *all times*, a *ſufficient Guide* in matters of Religion, I wou'd ask this Gentleman, zealous as he is for its Honour, What He has left for *Revelation* to perform? A Man wou'd be thought impertinent, who ſhou'd offer to direct another the right way, whom he ſaw provided of a *ſufficient Guide*. And is not *Revelation*, upon this Gentleman's Scheme, as uſeleſs, not to ſay impertinent, an Offer? If it be a juſt maxim in Natural Philoſophy, that *Nature does nothing in vain*, that all her operations are conducted by deſign, and for wiſe ends and purpoſes, can we ſuppoſe the *Author of Nature*, a Being of Infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, acting, in any of his diſpenſations to his Creatures, in vain and to no purpoſe? Thus this Gentleman, by aſcribing to *Natural Reaſon* an *abſolute ſufficiency* in religious matters, does, in effect, make *Revelation* of *no Uſe*, and, by neceſſary conſequence, denies its very *reality* and Exiſtence.

This conſequence I make no doubt he ſaw, and even deſign'd ſhou'd follow

low from his Hypotheſis, tho' at the expence of ſetting his Profeſſions at variance with his Principles, and being inconſiſtent with himſelf. However, as he grants, in words at leaſt, and as his Scheme neceſſarily ſuppoſes a *Revelation* to have been *actually* given to the World; let us try, whether this very Conceſſion may not be improv'd into a good Argument, *a priori*, why Reveal'd Religion ſhou'd, *in ſome reſpects, differ* from *Natural.*

I argue thus. If a Revelation be *actually* given to the World, it muſt be given for ſome *reaſon*, or for none. If for ſome, I ask, What was That reaſon? I am ſure our Author will agree with me, that Man, in his *Original* State and Condition, ſtood in no need of Revelation. It follows, then, (ſince God cannot be ſuppos'd to give it, when it was not wanted) that there muſt have happen'd ſome *change* in the condition of Human Nature. This *Change*, then, whatever it was, and however it came to paſs, was the *Ground* and *Reaſon* of the Revelation. And if ſo, is it not reaſonable to conclude, that a *Reveal'd* Religion, the *Expediency* of which is built upon a ſuppos'd *Alteration* in the State of Human Nature, ſhou'd,

ſhou'd, in *ſome reſpects, differ* from meer *Natural Religion*, which was the Religion of mankind in its original, primitive, State? — It is not my buſineſs, at preſent, to ſhew, in *what* reſpects Reveal'd Religion differs from Natural: It is ſufficient for my preſent purpoſe to demonſtrate the Reaſonableneſs of concluding, *a priori*, that it *may* do ſo in *ſome* reſpects.

I confeſs, Our Author's Scheme is not quite ſo inconſiſtent with itſelf, as to ſuppoſe any *real change* to have happen'd in Human Nature. He even reaſons from the contrary Suppoſition, that it has been always *the Same*; tho', in this opinion, he plainly runs counter to Reaſon, Hiſtory, and Experience. Yet I deſire it may be obſerv'd, from the foregoing Chain of Argument, that the Suppoſition of an *actual Revelation* being given to the World does, of itſelf, without the ſupports of Hiſtory, or Experience, clearly infer *ſome Change* to have really happen'd. What an additional ſtrength, then, muſt this Reaſoning receive, when Hiſtory and Experience unite in confirming its Truth and Juſtneſs, and in demonſtrating *that* to have really come to paſs, which Reaſon alone, from the conſideration

ration of an *Actual Revelation* might juſtly infer to have happen'd? And, as from hence we deduce the Suppoſition of a *Change* in the condition of Human Nature; ſo this conſequence, you ſee, evidently leads to another, namely, that *Reveal'd* Religion is really *Diſtinct* from *Natural*; which, at once, overthrows this Author's Hypotheſis of making 'em both, in all reſpects, exactly *the ſame.*

To apply this Argument, briefly, to the Caſe of *Chriſtianity.* In the *original* State of Mankind, as Human Nature came Pure and Unſullied out of the Hands of its Creator, *Natural Reaſon* was its only Guide, and a *ſufficient Guide* it undoubtedly was. After a Revolution of a certain Number of Years, an *expreſs Revelation* appears, from unqueſtionable Proofs, to have been given to the World. This (agreeably to the foregoing Reaſoning) implies ſome *Alteration* to have happen'd in the condition of Human Nature. What this Change was, The Hiſtory of Mankind, The Complaints of Moraliſts, together with our own Experience, ſufficiently inform us; and it appears to have been an almoſt General *Defection from Nature and right Reaſon,* a *Depravity* of *Manners*

Manners and *Judgment*, propagated, and confirm'd by *Education*, *Cuſtom*, and *Example*; * in ſhort, a Change of Man

C from

* " Simul atque editi in Lucem, & ſuſcepti ſumus, " in omni continuo *pravitate*, & in ſummâ *opinionum* " *perverſitate*, verſamur; ut pene cum lacte nutricis er- " rorem ſuxiſſe videamur. Cum vero *parentibus* reddi- " ti, deinde *magiſtris* traditi ſumus, tum ita variis im- " buimur erroribus, ut vanitati veritas, & opinioni con- " firmatæ *Natura ipſa* cedat. Cum vero accedit eodem, " quaſi maximus quidem magiſter, *Populus*, atque omnis " undique ad vitia conſentiens multitudo, tum plane *in-* " *ficimur* opinionum pravitate, *a naturaque ipſâ deſciſci-* " *mus*. Cic. Tuſc. Queſt. lib. 3.

Our Author, in his 14th Chapter, *(which is wholly level'd againſt the late* Dr. Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Reveal'd Religion) *makes the following remark upon the Doctor's quoting this very paſſage.*

" *The Dr. (ſays he) having taken a large paſſage from* " Cicero, *where the Orator very rhetorically deſcribes the* " *great corruptions of his times, and aſſigns the cauſes* " *thereof, makes this remark*, that a livelier deſcription " of the *preſent* corrupt State of Human Nature is not " eaſily to be met with: *which I think is ſufficiently* " *owning, that Human Nature* at preſent *is far from be-* " *ing exalted to ſo high a ſtate of perfection, or in the* " *leaſt mended.* (p. 402.)

I cannot anſwer this remark better, than in the words of the ingenious Dr. Stebbing, " *The Gentleman thinks,* " *it ſeems, that notwithſtanding the ſuppos'd virtue of the* " *Goſpel to reform Mankind, the world is not one jot the* " *better for it; and he would be very glad to perſuade* " *you, that Dr.* Clarke *was of the ſame opinion But* " *what does the Doctor ſay? Why, that the deſcription,* " *which* Cicero *gave of Human Nature in* his *time, agrees* " *with the corrupted State of mankind in this: Very well,* " *and whoever looks into the paſſage of* Cicero, *cited by* " *Dr.* Clarke, *will find that it does. But what then?* " *Did the Doctor mean to ſay, that the State of mankind* " *is not* in the leaſt mended *by the coming in of the Goſ-*

" *pel?*

from an *Upright* and *Innocent*, to a *depravd* and *ſinful*, Creature. Hence, then, muſt ariſe the *Expediency* of the *Chriſtian Revelation*; and, therefore, as *Natural* Religion was the Religion of *Innocent*, unoffending Mankind; *Reveal'd* Religion may very properly be defin'd to be *the Religion* of the *ſame* Mankind, in its *ſinful*, offending, State. Now, as the *Circumſtances* of Human Nature, to which Natural and Reveal'd Religion muſt be ſuppos'd *reſpectively* adapted, evidently appear to be *different*, here is room for the *Religious themſelves*, in *ſome* reſpects, to *differ*. And there is great Reaſon to think, that *Other means* were wanting, in the *corrupt* Eſtate of Mankind, to *reſtore*, and ſecure, the Intereſts of *Virtue* and Goodneſs, than were neceſſary to have *continu'd* them, before it had degenerated, and become corrupt.

Thus far I have argu'd only *ex conceſſo*. The Reader will obſerve, that this Reaſoning is not deſign'd as a compleat determination of the point in que-

" *tel? No ſuch matter. He ſpeaks* here *of Human Na-*
" *ture*, as ſuch, *and abſtracted from any Influence or Im-*
" *provement from the Goſpel. And, in this ſenſe, it is*
" *certain, that Human Nature is* now, *and was* then,
" *exactly the ſame*". *Defence of Dr.* Clarke. p. 93. & 94.

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ſtion. All, that is here aim'd at, is to ſhew the inconſiſtency of ſuppoſing an *actual Revelation*, and at the ſame time making it to be nothing more, than *meer Natural Religion*; and that the very ſuppoſition implies a *propable* Ground or Reaſon of *ſome difference* between them. But, becauſe it will be neceſſary entirely to lay open the fallacy of an *Hypotheſis*, which is deſign'd, under the pretence of *reconciling* Reveal'd Religion with Natural, to ſuperſede the Uſe and Expediency of the Former, and conſequently to deſtroy the Credit and Authority of the *Goſpel-Revelation*; I go on to conſider our Author's Reaſoning in ſupport of it.

It wou'd be tedious, and indeed unneceſſary, to follow him thro' all the turnings and windings of an Hypotheſis, which he has wiredrawn thro' above four hundred Pages in *Quarto*, and to view each particular Argument in the variety of Lights he has ſet it. This would ſwell the Criticiſm to a larger ſize, than the Performance it cenſures. But there is a *paſſage* in his *firſt Chapter*, which is both the *Ground-work* and *Summary* of his whole *Scheme*; the reſt of his long, elaborate, Treatiſe being but a large *Comment* or *Reading* up-

on the Arguments there advanc'd. I beg leave, therefore, to produce the paſſage, at length, becauſe I wou'd not be thought to diſſemble any part of the force of this Gentleman's Reaſoning.

It is thus introduc'd.

B. (One of the perſonages of the *dialogue)* informs his friend, (*A.*) that he had been " in company with a " great many clergy-men, at a Biſhop's " primary Viſitation; where the com- " plaint was general of the coldneſs " and indifferency, with which people " receiv'd the Speculative points of " Chriſtianity, and all its holy rites, " for which they had formerly Shewn " ſo great a zeal. This coldneſs (he " tells him) they imputed to thoſe *Low-* " *church-men*, who lay the main ſtreſs " on Natural Religion; and withal ſo " magnify the doctrine of *Sincerity*, as " in effect to place All Religions on a " level, where the Profeſſors are alike " Sincere". *(p.* 1.)

I paſs over that part of *A*'s reply, which concerns the doctrine of *Sincerity*, with only this ſhort remark, that he evades giving a direct anſwer to the objection; only aſſerting, that " a ſin-

" cere

" cere examination (into religious mat-
" ters) muſt always make men accep-
" table to God;" which is very true, but no ſolution of the difficulty; ſince it will never follow, that, becauſe a Pagan and a Chriſtian are *equally ſincere*, therefore their Religions are *equally good.*

As to the other of the *two important points*, he replys directly, that " too " great ſtreſs can't be laid on *Natural* " Religion," which (as he takes it) " differs not from *Reveal'd*, but in *the* " *manner of its being communicated*; the " one being the *internal*, as the other " the *external Revelation* of the *ſame* un-
" changeable *will* of a *Being*, who is " *at all times* infinitely *Wiſe* and *Good*". (*p.* 3.)

Surpriz'd at the *Novelty* of this *Hypotheſis*, *B*, replys, " Surely, Sir, this " muſt be extreamly Heterodox. Can " you believe, that *Natural* and *Re-*
" *veal'd* Religion differ only in the " manner of their being convey'd to " us?" Then follows the Proof of the Propoſition; in which our Author plays the *Socrates*, and reaſons from the conceſſions of his Pupil, in the following manner.

" *A*,

" *A.* As Heterodox, as I may ſeem " at preſent, I doubt not, but by asking " you a few queſtions, to let you See I " advance nothing in *this point* without " Reaſon; and, in order to it, I deſire " to be inform'd, whether *God* has not " from the beginning given mankind " ſome Rule or Law for their conduct; " and whether the obſerving That did " not make 'em acceptable to him".

" *B.* There can be no doubt, but " the obſerving ſuch a Law muſt have " anſwer'd the End, for which it was " given, and made Men acceptable to " God.

" *A.* What more can any *External* " *Revelation* do, than render Men ac- " ceptable to God? — Again,

" If *God*, then, from the beginning, " gave Men *a Religion*, was That Re- " ligion perfect, or imperfect?

" *B.* Moſt Perfect, no doubt; ſince " no Religion can come from a Being " of infinite wiſdom and perfection, " but what is *abſolutely perfect.*

" *A.* Can therefore a Religion, *abſo-* " *lutely perfect*, admit of any Alteration, " or be capable of Addition, or Dimi- " nution, and not be as immutable as " the Author of it? Can Revelation " *add* any thing to a Religion, thus

" abſolutely

" abſolutely perfect, univerſal, and im-
" mutable? — Beſides, If *God* has gi-
" ven mankind a Law, he muſt have
" given them likewiſe *Sufficient means*
" of *knowing* it; he wou'd otherwiſe
" have defeated his own Intent in gi-
" ving it; ſince a Law, as far as it is
" unintelligible, ceaſes to be a Law.
" Shall we ſay, that God, who had
" the forming human underſtanding,
" as well as his own Laws, did not
" know how to adjuſt the one to the
" other?

" If God at all times was *willing*
" *all men ſhou'd come to the knowledge*
" *of his Truth*, cou'd not his infinite
" Power at all times find ſufficient
" means for making mankind capable
" of knowing, what his infinite Good-
" neſs deſign'd they ſhou'd know?

" *B.* I grant you, that God was al-
" ways willing, that All men ſhou'd
" come to the knowledge of his Truth;
" and we ſay, that the *Chriſtian* Reli-
" gion, being the only true and abſo-
" lutely perfect Religion, was what
" God, from the beginning, deſign'd
" for all mankind.

" *A.* If ſo, it follows, that the *Chri-*
" *ſtian* Religion has exiſted from the be-
" ginning; and that God both *Then*, and

" *ever*

" *ever ſince*, has continu'd to give to all " Mankind ſufficient means to know it; " and that it is their duty to know, be- " lieve, profeſs, and practice it; So that " *Chriſtianity*, tho' the name be of la- " ter date, muſt be *as old*, and as ex- " tenſive, as Human Nature, and, as " the Law of our Creation, muſt have " been then implanted in us by God " himſelf.

By ſuch kind of Reaſoning, as this, Our Author endeavours to prove *Chriſtianity* to be *as old as the Creation*, or, in other words, nothing more than the *Law of Nature differently communicated.* As it is very evident, with what view this Hypotheſis is advanc'd; that the real deſign of it is to ſet aſide Reveal'd Religion, as of no Uſe to mankind; it will be neceſſary, in vindication of the Chriſtian Inſtitution, to detect the Fallacy of this Reaſoning; which I flatter my ſelf I ſhall be able to do, in the following Remarks on it.

Firſt, then, He begins with asking, " Whether GOD has not from the be- " ginning given Mankind ſome Rule or " Law for their conduct?" This is allow'd him, and upon this foundation he goes on to build *the Abſolute Perfection of the Religion of Nature.* But I beg leave

leave to ſtop our *modern Socrates* awhile in his full career of Interrogatories, in order to enquire, in what ſenſe *Natural Religion* may be ſaid to be *given* us by *God himſelf*. This will be found to be no unneceſſary Queſtion, when we come to ſtate the true notion of the *Perfection* of *Natural Religion*. Now, as we receive our *Reaſoning Faculties*, no leſs than our *Exiſtence*, from *God*, whatever, by the due uſe of them, we diſcover to be his Will, may, *in ſome ſenſe*, be ſaid to be a *Rule* given us by *God himſelf*; tho', *ſtrictly ſpeaking*, it muſt be referr'd to the Exerciſe of our *Reaſon*, as its *immediate Source* and Origin. Mr. *Locke* has, I think, clearly ſhewn, that the Human Mind has no *Innate Idea*, even of the *Deity* himſelf; much leſs can we ſuppoſe an *Innate Religion*, a Scheme of Duties, written originally on Man's Heart, and immediately diſcoverable to his infant Underſtanding. It is no difficult matter to trace all our knowledge of the Nature of God, and the Duties ariſing from thence, from the firſt *impreſſions* made on our *Senſes*, by *External Objects*, thro' the ſeveral *Operations* of the mind. *Senſation* lets in upon the Soul the diſtinct Ideas of the Greatneſs, Order, and Variety, of Natural Bodies

about us; and *Reflection* from theſe materials ſtrikes out *a Deity*. This noble Idea becomes the pregnant Mother of all our Notions of Adoration, and Prayer, and the whole Syſtem of Moral Virtues. Here, then, you have the *true Source*, and Origin, of *Natural Religion*. It is the immediate Reſult of *Natural Reaſon*, and flows from the due Exerciſe of thoſe faculties, which God has given us; and therefore can only be *ultimately* referr'd to him, as the *Author* and Giver of thoſe faculties. The caſe is much the ſame, as in the Acquirement of Arts and Sciences. The faculty of *Invention*, it is true, is the Gift of Heaven; but the diſcovery itſelf is our own; not that I wou'd infer from hence, that the knowledge of our Duty is as difficult to be attain'd, as a ſkill in the *Mathematicks*. Let Natural Religion be as *plain*, as you pleaſe, ſo plain, that *he*, *that runs*, *may read it*; yet ſtill it muſt be *read*; we muſt exerciſe our Reaſon about the Relations we ſtand in to God, and one another, before we can have any knowledge of the Duties, which flow from thoſe Relations; and this is all I contend for.

This, then, is what eſſentially diſtinguiſhes *Natural* from *Reveal'd* Religion, that

that the former is a Diſcovery of *our own*, and what Reaſon collects from the apparent Nature of Things; but the latter is founded upon the expreſs Declaration and Interpoſition of God himſelf: and therefore it is very plain, in what ſenſe alone it can be ſaid, that *God has from the beginning given mankind ſome Rule or Law for their conduct*; and that is, by giving them ſuch abilities of Reaſon and Underſtanding, as to be able, by the due Uſe and Exerciſe of them, to form to themſelves ſome Rule or Law.

But does not Our Author manifeſtly confound this diſtinction between the true Source of Natural, and that of Reveal'd Religion? Does not His manner of Expreſſion inſinuate, as if the Supream Being, immediately upon the Creation of Man, did, in perſon, or by an expreſs meſſenger from heaven, give him *a Religion*, and inſtitute a ſett of Duties, to be the Eternal Rule, and Law, of his Conduct? And, is not this plain from the uſe he makes of it, in ſuppoſing Natural Religion to be an *abſolutely* perfect Religion, for this very reaſon, as *coming from a Being of Infinite Perfection?* This, I own, is artfully enough contriv'd to prejudice the incautious Reader; and, by blending the *Idea*

of *Revelation* with that of *Natural Religion*, admirably ſerves an Hypotheſis, which is to prove 'em both to be *the ſame*; tho' at the expence of this plain contradiction (which perhaps he was not aware of) that, whilſt he excepts *the manner of their being communicated*, he expreſſes himſelf, as if they were communicated after the *ſame manner*. But, The truth is, His manner of arguing oblig'd him to make uſe of this *ambiguous* Account of the origin of Natural Religion. For had he, in expreſs terms, aſſerted, that *Man* had, *from the beginning*, by the exerciſe of his *Reaſon*, form'd to himſelf *ſome Rule or Law for his conduct*, he wou'd have been at a loſs to have infer'd from thence the *abſolute Perfection* of the *Religion* of *Nature*.

But to go on; It being allow'd him (as he thinks it muſt) that *God has, from the beginning, given Mankind ſome Rule or Law for his conduct*; and that *the obſervation* of that Rule *muſt render men acceptable to God*; he aſks, with an air of triumph, " What more can any Ex- " ternal Revelation do, than render Men " acceptable to God?" But what can reaſonably be concluded from hence? Why nothing more, than that the *End*, the Deſign, the Aim, both of Natural and

Reveal'd

Reveal'd Religion are *the ſame*, not that the *Religions themſelves* are ſo; unleſs he can prove it impoſſible to attain the ſame End, by different means, under different circumſtances.

But the favourite Argument, and that upon which he lays the greateſt ſtreſs, is the *Abſolute Perfection of the Religion of Nature:* and to put it paſt all doubt, in what ſenſe he underſtands Natural Religion to be *abſolutely perfect*, he excludes from it all poſſibility of *Alteration*, *Addition*, or *Diminution*; i. e. in plain terms, The *Religion of Nature* is *ſo perfect*, as to be incapable of receiving any *Improvement* from *Revelation.*

At preſent, I wave all conſideration of the *corruption* and *depravity* of Human Nature. Let the Natural *Reaſon* of mankind have all the *Perfection* you can ſuppoſe it capable of; and let us examine, whether the *Religion of Nature*, even upon this Suppoſition, can be ſaid to be *abſolutely perfect.* And here we muſt take into the queſtion the foregoing account of the *origin* of Natural Religion; which will, I think, help us to a true Eſtimate of its *perfection*: For, if the *Natural Religion* of Mankind ſprings from the due *Exerciſe* of their *Rational* Faculties, Its *Perfection* (to ſpeak

ſpeak with the *Mathematicians)* muſt be in a *given Ratio* to the *Perfection* of Human *Reaſon:* i. e. the Religion of Nature is more or leſs perfect, in proportion as Human Reaſon is more or leſs ſo. *Happineſs*, *Reaſon*, and *Religion*, have a cloſe and intimate connection and dependance on each other, and, like the ſeveral *Quantities* in a *Series* of *Proportionals*, vary together. Thus a *given degree* of *Happineſs*, to be attain'd, requires a *proportionable* ſhare of *Reaſon*, in order to attain it; and a *determinate degree* of *Reaſon* will always produce a *Religion*, whoſe *Perfection* will be in an exact *Ratio* or *Proportion* to it.

The Queſtion, then, recurs to this; whether the *Natural Reaſon* of mankind in its pureſt and moſt uncorrupted ſtate, be *abſolutely perfect*. But ſure the fondeſt Advocates for the *ſufficiency* of Human Reaſon never aſſerted it to be ſo. It is certain, God has given to different, intelligent, Creatures different degrees of Reaſon and Underſtanding. Thus *Angels* muſt excel *Men* in the Strength and Capacity of their intellectual faculties, as much as the *Angelic* is ſuperior, in the ſcale of Exiſtence, to the *Human* Nature. And, therefore, as all *Rational* Beings muſt have their *proper Religion*, will

will it not follow, that *the Religion of Angels* (which muſt ariſe, as well as *That* of *Men*, from the Knowledge they have of the *Nature* and *Relations* of *things)* muſt not *their Religion*, I ſay, be ſo much more perfect, than *that* of *men*, in proportion as the apprehenſions and underſtandings of theſe *exalted* Creatures are more enlarg'd and extenſive, than *thoſe* of the *Human Race?* Conſequently the *natural Religion* of *Mankind* cannot be ſaid to be *abſolutely perfect.*

And this very naturally leads us to the *true Notion* of its *Perfection*; which can be no more than this, that it is *ſufficient*, if duly attended to, for all the purpoſes of *Human Happineſs:* i. e. *Natural Reaſon, unprejudic'd* and *uncorrupt*, is *ſufficient* to guide us to all *that Happineſs*, for the enjoyment of which our Creator form'd us. To explain this farther. Whatever is ſufficient to produce the End, propos'd to be attain'd by it, is ſo far *perfect.* I ſay *ſo far* only: for, conſider'd in another Light, it may really be *imperfect.* If I have *ſtrength* enough of Body to perform with eaſe all the functions of Life, my ſtrength is, with reſpect to me, *Perfect*; tho' I have not the Limbs and Force of a *Giant.* I may have *Light* enough, by the

friendly

friendly Aid of the *Moon*, to direct me in the right road, and ſecure me from the danger of ſtumbling, tho' I cannot, at that time, enjoy the Light of the Noon-day *Sun*. In both caſes, the *Strength*, I act by, and the *Light*, that guides me, are *ſufficient* for the End propos'd, and conſequently, in that reſpect, *Perfect*, tho' were my ſtrength to be compar'd with that of a Giant, or the faint beams of the Moon with that full ſplendor of Day, which the meridian Sun affords, they wou'd each be found, in the compariſon, to be in reality *Imperfect*.

Apply this to the caſe of *Natural Religion*. The End, propos'd by God, in the production of mankind, was, without doubt, the Happineſs of his Creatures. For this purpoſe, he gave them *Reaſon*, to enable them to diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil, and to diſcover the will of their Creator, or, which is the ſame thing, to diſcern what Actions and Duties the ſeveral Relations they ſtood in to God, and one another, naturally and neceſſarily requir'd of them: and the due obſervation of theſe Duties, thus diſcover'd, was undoubtedly *ſufficient* to conduct them to all the Happineſs, of which their Natures were capable,

ble. Tho' the *Reaſon* of *Men* be not ſo *Strong*, as that of *Angels*; tho' Nature does not hold out ſo bright and glaring a *Light* to the former, as ſhe does to the latter; yet has Man no cauſe of complaint, that his Reaſon is not *ſufficiently* ſtrong, or that he is left to grope uncertainly, in the dark, in ſearch of his Duty, for want of Light enough from Nature to lead him directly and unerringly to it. In this ſenſe therefore, *Natural Religion*, as being a *Sufficient Rule*, was a *Perfect* One.

But will not this ſuperſede the Uſe of *Divine Revelation?* If God has, from the beginning, *ſufficiently* provided for Human Happineſs, to what purpoſe any *new* diſcovery of his Will? This is the very Scope of our Author's Argument, when he adds, " Beſides, if " God has given mankind a Law, he " muſt have given them likewiſe ſuffi- " cient means of knowing it; he wou'd " otherwiſe have defeated his own in- " tent in giving it; ſince a Law, as far " as it is unintelligible ceaſes to be a " Law. Shall we ſay, that God, who " had the forming human underſtand- " ing, as well as his own Laws, did not " know how to adjuſt the one to the " other?" and preſently after, " If God,

" at all times, was *willing all men ſhould* " *come to the knowledge of his truth*, " cou'd not his infinite wiſdom and " Power, *at all times*, find ſufficient " means, for making Men capable of " knowing, What his infinite Goodneſs " deſign'd they ſhou'd know?"

To which I reply, that God Almighty did actually *give* mankind *ſufficient means of knowing* this *Law*, by giving them the Faculty of *Reaſon:* but, tho' it be impoſſible to ſuppoſe God ſhou'd *himſelf defeat his own intent*, might not Man, by a gradual *corruption* of his Reaſon, *defeat* this *intent* of Providence; eſpecially, if we conſider him as, what he really is, a *Free-Agent*; which makes it improper for God to interpoſe, without *indeed defeating his own intent*, in giving him *Free-Will?* If the perfect knowledge of this Law depends upon an impartial Exerciſe of our Reaſoning Faculties, will not their being *deprav'd*, and prejudic'd by Cuſtom and Example, render the Law, tho' not abſolutely *unintelligible*, much more *difficult* to be underſtood, than originally it was; it making no difference in the preſent caſe, whether the Law itſelf be unintelligible, or the Faculties, by which only it can be apprehended, be impair'd, and become

come defective; as a Man is equally in the dark, whether the Light be remov'd from him, or his Eyes ſhut — ? So that, tho' *Human Underſtanding* was originally *adjuſted to the Law of Nature*, it might become, thro' prejudice and corruption, incapable of a clear and thorough apprehenſion of it, and conſequently liable to great miſtakes about it. Thus, to illuſtrate the thing by a familiar Inſtance, The *Eye* is *adjuſted* to the *natural Colours* of Bodies; yet, to a man in a *jaundice* every thing appears tinctur'd with *yellow*. The ſame may be true of the *mind*'s *Eye*, which may be ſo far impair'd, as to judge wrong even of the plaineſt Laws of Nature. If therefore you take into the conſideration a *ſuppos'd Degeneracy* of Human Nature, *Natural Religion*, in ſuch a ſtate, will be (*relatively*, tho' not *abſolutely*) an *Imperfect*, becauſe an *Inſufficient*, Religion; for the ſame Reaſon, that, in the uncorrupt ſtate of Mankind, we ſay it was a *Perfect*, becauſe a *ſufficient*, Religion.

But it will be ſaid, Has this ſuppos'd Degeneracy of Human Nature any foundation in Truth and Reality? I am afraid, upon Examination, it will be found to be more than *Suppoſition*. If

Hiſtory is to be credited, if the complaints of moraliſts are juſtly grounded, Human Reaſon, in *general*, is exceedingly degenerate and corrupt. A few *great Minds*, indeed, there have been, A *Socrates*, A *Plato*, A *Cicero*, who were not *entirely* born down with the torrent of *Error*; but, alas!

Apparent rari nantes in gurgite vaſto.

and it muſt be remember'd, that when we aſſert the *Expediency* of Revelation, we mean, with regard to the *Bulk* of *mankind:* tho' were we to conſider the diverſity of opinions amongſt the greateſt Philoſophers, in points of the higheſt conſequence to religion, we might apply to the whole world, without exception, what the Author of the Book of *Baruch*, ſpeaking of *wiſdom*, ſays, " It hath not been heard of in *Canaan*, " neither hath it been ſeen in *Theman.* " The *Agareens*, that ſeek wiſdom up- " on Earth, the merchants of *Meran*, " of *Theman*, the Author's of Fables, " and ſearchers out of Underſtanding; " none of theſe have known the way of " wiſdom, or remember her Paths." *c.* 3. *v.* 22, 23.

You

You ſee, then, the Foundation, upon which the *Expediency* of Revelation is built; not any *Defect* in the *Original Law*, but One in *Human Underſtanding*. And, indeed, if we take a view of the world, before the Light of the Goſpel ſhone upon it, and ſee it deep ſunk in the darkneſs of Ignorance and Error; if we reflect on the *Idolatrous* Practices of Mankind, and conſider, that the *groſſeſt Immoralities*, inſtead of being diſcountenanc'd by Religion, were frequently made a part of it, we ſhall have reaſon ſufficient to think, that Mankind was, *for many ages, in a deplorable State, for want of an external Revelation*; notwithſtanding our Author's Argument to the contrary; which is, that " If God does " every thing, that is fit for him to do, " Men cou'd not be in ſuch ſtate, be- " cauſe God did not do a thing, which " was not fit for him to do, *viz.* make " a Revelation, before it was fit for him " to make it." (*p.* 195.) that is, I ſuppoſe, if Men had actually been in ſuch a deplorable ſtate, as I have deſcrib'd, it would have been fit for God to have made a Revelation of his will, and conſequently he would have done it; but, as in fact he did not do it, it follows, that Men were not in ſuch a ſtate. To which

which I anſwer, that Men might have been in ſuch a deplorable ſtate, and yet it might not have been fit for God, in thoſe ages, to make a Revelation of his will; for it ought to be conſider'd, that a *Revelation* is an *Act* of *meer Favour*, not of *Juſtice*; and ſurely God was no more oblig'd to *reſtore* a Creature, *fallen* from his original Perfection, than he was to have created him, at firſt, without a poſſibility of falling. So that, had Mankind continu'd to the End of the World in the ſame deplorable State, I cannot ſee, that it wou'd have been any Impeachment of the divine Juſtice. If therefore it cannot be prov'd from the Attribute of Juſtice, that God *ought* to have given mankind a Revelation, may there not have been wiſe Reaſons, which we are unacquainted with, why He defer'd doing, what he was not *oblig'd* to do at all, to a more diſtant period of Time? The Subſtance of what I have here advanc'd, upon this ſubject of the *Perfection* and *ſufficiency* of *Natural Religion*, is briefly this.

The *Religion of Nature* is the *immediate* Reſult, or Production, of *Human Reaſon*. And, therefore, when we ſay, that " God has from the beginning gi-
" ven mankind ſome Rule or Law for
" his

" his conduct," we can only mean As he is the *Author* and Giver of thoſe *Reaſoning faculties*, by the due exerciſe of which we diſcover his Will. And, therefore,

Even in the *uncorrupted* Eſtate of Human Nature, *Natural Religion* cannot be ſaid to be *abſolutely perfect*, becauſe *Natural Reaſon*, from whence it flows, is not *abſolutely perfect*; but its *Perfection* can only conſiſt in its *ſufficiency* to produce that *Happineſs*, for which mankind was form'd. But,

In the corrupt and *degenerate* condition of Human *Reaſon*, *Natural* Religion will be *(relatively* tho' not *abſolutely)* an *Imperfect*, becauſe an *Inſufficient*, Religion. And,

Upon this very foundation is built the *Expediency* of a *divine Revelation*; not on any *real Defect* in the *original* Law, but *One* in *Human Underſtanding*.

And thus far I have examin'd our Author's reaſoning in the fore-cited Paſſage, and flatter my ſelf, that, what I have here advanc'd, is ſomething more to the purpoſe, than the trifling Reply, which he has artfully put into the mouth of his Opponent. For all that *B.* ſays, upon the Occaſion is this. " I grant " you, that God was always willing all

" Men

" Men ſhould come to the knowledge " of true Religion; and we ſay, that " the Chriſtian Religion, being the on- " ly True and abſolutely perfect Reli- " gion, was what God, *from the begin-* " *ning*, deſign'd for all mankind." The true ſecret of making *B.* Reply, in this manner, diſcovers itſelf immediately, in the Uſe our Author makes of it. " If " ſo (ſays he) it follows, that the *Chri-* " *ſtian* Religion muſt have exiſted *from* " *the beginning.*" If he will give me leave, for once, to help the poor Gentleman out, he ſhall anſwer in the following manner. ' I grant you, that God ' was always willing, that *All Men ſhou'd* ' *come to the knowledge of True Religion*; ' and therefore, he gave them *Rea-* ' *ſon*, the due Exerciſe of which wou'd ' infallibly have led them to it; but, ' thro' the gradual *corruptions* of Human ' Nature, it became, at length, exceed- ' ing *difficult* for the Bulk of mankind ' to arrive at the knowledge of True ' Religion, by the help of *unaſſiſted Reaſon* ' alone. *Revelation*, then, was plainly ' wanting; and the *Chriſtian* being, ' from unqueſtionable Proofs, the only ' *True Revelation*, and, among the ma- ' ny *inſtituted* Religions in the world, ' undeniably the beſt, was what God,

' *from*

' *from the beginning*, deſign'd ſhou'd be ' obſerv'd by *all thoſe*, to whom, in *his* ' *own* good appointed *time*, he ſhou'd be ' graciouſly pleas'd to *reveal* it '. This ought to have been the Anſwer. But he had it in his power to make the Gentleman expreſs himſelf, juſt as he thought fit; and it was wiſely done to frame ſuch a Reply for him, as ſhou'd directly infer the very Hypotheſis, which our Author was labouring to eſtabliſh.

And here I cannot but obſerve, how artfully he has endeavour'd to perplex the Subject with difficulties; not *ſuch* in reality, but meer Phantoms of his own raiſing; as, firſt, at Page the 7th; where poor *B.* is ſtrangely bewilder'd. He " cannot deny Men's being acceptable " to God, whatever their opinions may " be; after having us'd all the means " God has given them for the diſcovery " of his Will;" and yet, " he does not " know how to admit it; for then, ſays " he, (pray mind the reaſon) what Re- " ligion ſoever men are of, That, I ſay, " however oppoſite to Chriſtianity, muſt " be the Religion God deſign'd for them." But why ſo, pray? I own I was at a loſs to gueſs the reaſon, why a Religion, oppoſite to Chriſtianity, can poſſibly be a Religion, deſign'd for any part of man-

kind by God himſelf; till, caſting my Eye back, I ſtumbled upon this profound Argument; *viz.* that " If Men, " having done all in their power, all " that God requires of 'em, to find out " his will, ſhou'd fall into oppoſite ſen- " timents, muſt it not be *the will of* " *God, that it ſhou'd be ſo?* Can God *will* " ſuch an Examination, and not *will* " what he foreknows muſt be the ne- " ceſſary conſequence?" *(p.* 6.) which I will venture to leave with the Reader, without any reply.

But *B.* plunges ſtill deeper in *difficulty.* " On the other hand (ſays he) ſhou'd I " own, that the duly uſing thoſe means " wou'd have caus'd all Men to be of " one Religion, yet I cannot ſee how " that cou'd be the *Chriſtian* Religion, " *except it has exiſted from the beginning.*" Artful enough! But where's the neceſſity, that this *Univerſal Religion* muſt have been the *Chriſtian?* on the contrary, had all men been of one Religion, pure, uncorrupted, *Natural* Religion, there wou'd have been no Occaſion for *Chriſtianity.*

Having ſhewn, upon how falſe a foundation our Author's Hypotheſis is built, it will be eaſy to demonſtrate the inconcluſiveneſs of the following Arguments,

ments, among many others, by which he has endeavour'd to confirm his General Aſſertion, that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion differ only in the manner of their being communicated.* As, firſt, He ſays,

" If God only commands, what the " Nature of things ſhews to be fit, it is " ſcarce poſſible, that Men (tho' now " endleſsly divided upon the account of " their different Traditions) ſhou'd mi- " ſtake their duty; ſince a Mind that is " attentive, can as eaſily diſtinguiſh *fit* " from *unfit*, as the Eye can Beauty from " Deformity, or the Ear Harmony from " Diſcord; and, if no commands can " alter the nature of things, or make " that fit, which is in itſelf unfit, Ex- " ternal Revelation muſt attend the Na- " ture and Relations of things, and can " *only* ſpeak what thoſe ſpeak." *(p.* 31.) Which is plainly ſuppoſing, that *Reaſon*, alone, is capable of determining every thing, which it is fit for God to command, even *antecedently* to the command itſelf: a very high Compliment to Human Reaſon; but which, in its greateſt perfection, I am afraid it does not deſerve. The utmoſt we can with any certainty affirm is, that, whenever God gives his Creatures any command, the

nature of things will ſhew it to be fit; the marks of wiſdom and goodneſs will plainly diſcover themſelves; and the attentive mind will perceive its fitneſs, as eaſily as the Eye diſtinguiſhes Beauty, or the Ear Harmony. But it will not follow, that therefore the Nature of things will point out to us, *a priori*, every thing, that is fit to be the ſubject of God's command; and that Human Reaſon is able previouſly to determine *every Law*, which the Supream Governor of the Univerſe ought to give his Creatures. Were this the caſe, we might reply to a *meſſenger* from Heaven, that he might ſpare himſelf the trouble of delivering his meſſage, ſince we were already, from the notices of our own Reaſon, appriz'd of his *Errand*. God, in his wiſe Providence, and ſuperintendency over Human Affairs, may ſee occaſion to give his Creatures Laws, which their own Foreſight cou'd not point out; but which will appear, when given, to be the reſult of conſummate Wiſdom. So that, tho' it be never ſo true, that External Revelation muſt attend the Nature and Reaſon of things, ſo far, as not to preſcribe any thing, which *contradicts* thoſe Relations; yet it is by no means a conſequence, that it can *only* ſpeak what they

they ſpeak. *Reveal'd* Religion may ſpeak *more* than *Natural*, provided the *Language of the former* do not contradict the *Voice of the latter*.

Hence, then, it is eaſy to anſwer the following Queſtions, which our Author immediately after puts. " Shou'd Re-
" velation require leſs, than thoſe rela-
" tions require, wou'd it not be an im-
" perfect Rule? And if it enjoyns more,
" wou'd it not argue the Author of it to
" be of a tyrannical Nature, impoſing
" on his ſubjects, and under ſevere Pe-
" nalties, unneceſſary things, and like-
" wiſe ſhew a deſign not of being be-
" loved, but hated and dreaded? And
" therefore thoſe, who ſee the conſe-
" quences of things, deſcribe the Chri-
" ſtian Religion as requiring ſuch things
" only, as, conſidering the Relations we
" ſtand in to God, and one another, are
" apparently for our Good." To which I reply, that it is a plain begging of the Queſtion, to ſay, that, " If Revelation
" enjoyns *more*, than the Law of Na-
" ture, it argues the Author of it to be
" of a tyrannical Nature, impoſing on
" his ſubjects *unneceſſary* things." To prove this, the Nature and Intent of the command itſelf muſt be taken into conſideration; and you can never be ſure a

Law

Law is unneceſſary, 'till you know *what* it is, and the *End*, for which it is given. Again,

" I deſire only to be allow'd, that " there's a Religion of Nature and Rea- " ſon, written in the Hearts of every " one of us from the firſt Creation; by " which all Mankind muſt judge of the " Truth of any Inſtituted Religion what- " ever: and, if it *varies* from the Reli- " gion of Nature and Reaſon, in any " one particular, nay in the minuteſt cir- " cumſtance; that is an argument, which " makes all things elſe, that can be ſaid " in its ſupport, totally ineffectual. If " ſo, muſt not *Natural Religion*, and *Ex-* " *ternal Revelation*, like two tallies, ex- " actly anſwer one another, without any " *other difference* between them, but as " to the *manner* of their being *deliver'd?* " And, how can it be otherwiſe? Can " Laws be imperfect, where a Legiſla- " tor is abſolutely perfect? Can Time " diſcover any thing to him, which he " did not foreſee from Eternity? And, " as his Wiſdom is always the ſame, ſo " is his Goodneſs, and conſequently, " from the conſideration of both theſe, " his Laws muſt always be the ſame. " Is it not, from the infinite wiſdom " and goodneſs of God, that you ſup-

" poſe

" poſe the *Goſpel* a moſt perfect Law,
" incapable of being repeal'd, or alter'd,
" or of having additions; and muſt not
" you own the *Law of Nature* as per-
" fect a Law, except you will ſay, that
" God did not arrive to the perfection
" of wiſdom and goodneſs, till about
" ſeventeen hundred years ago? *(p.* 60.)

I have already explain'd, at large, in what ſenſe alone the Religion of Nature can be ſaid to come from God; and that is, As it is the Reſult of thoſe faculties of Reaſon and Underſtanding, which we receive immediately from him. Which Account of the ſource and Origin of Natural Religion will ſhew us, how far we may ſafely grant our Author's *Poſtulatum*, that *there is a Religion of Nature and Reaſon written in the Hearts of every one of us from the firſt creation*; namely thus far, that Every Man is naturally endu'd with a capacity of diſtinguiſhing *Right* from *Wrong*. This being premis'd, we will allow him, that the Natural Reaſon of Mankind is the proper *Judge of the Truth of any Inſtituted Religion whatever*; but not, that *if Reveal'd Religion varies from Natural, in any one particular, nay in the minuteſt circumſtance, that is an argument, which makes every thing elſe, which can be ſaid in*

in its ſupport totally ineffectual. Had he ſaid, *If it contradicts the Religion of Nature and Reaſon*, he wou'd have ſaid what is true. But *to vary* from a thing, is not always to *contradict* it. A Prince, forming Laws for his own Kingdom upon the Model of Thoſe of another, may *vary* from his *Pattern*, as the particular circumſtances of his own Subjects require, without *contradicting* it. And, ſhou'd the Circumſtances of Human Nature require an *Inſtituted* Religion, in ſome reſpects *different* from what Meer Nature cou'd preſcribe, ſuch a Religion wou'd not oppoſe, or in the leaſt contradict, the Principles of Nature and Reaſon; on the contrary it wou'd be perfectly agreeable to them, as being exactly accommodated to the Wants and Exigencies of Human Nature — But, *Can Laws be imperfect, where a Legiſlator is abſolutely perfect?* How, for God's ſake, does this prove, that God can give no *new Laws?* It only proves, that he cannot alter or mend thoſe, that he has given; that, whatever commands he iſſues out to his Creatures, can have no defects — But, *Can Time diſcover any thing to him, which he did not foreſee from Eternity?* No! but he may *defer* giving *new Laws*, till a *fullneſs of time*, a proper

per ſeaſon, of which he is ſurely the beſt Judge; ſo that God may have been equally *wiſe* and *good ſeventeen hundred Years ago*, when he left Men to collect his will from the Exerciſe of their Reaſon alone, as he is now, that he has given them an Expreſs Revelation of it.

The Laſt Argument, which I ſhall, at preſent, take notice of, occurs, *p.* 220. " If it be evident (ſays he) that we " can't diſcern, whether any inſtituted " Religion contains every thing worthy, " and nothing unworthy, of a divine " Original, except we can antecedently " by our Reaſon diſcern what is, and " what is not, worthy of having God " for its Author; it neceſſarily follows, " that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion* " *can't differ:* becauſe, whatever Rea- " ſon ſhews to be worthy of having " God for its Author, muſt *belong to* " *Natural Religion*, and whatever Rea- " ſon tells us is unworthy of having " God for its Author, can never be- " long to Reveal'd Religion. 'Tis up- " on this very plan I have endeavour'd " to ſhew you wherein *Genuine Chriſti-* " *anity* conſiſts.

We meet with the ſame notion at *p.* 64. where *B.* having aſk'd, " whether

APPENDIX.

OUR Author, in his *fourth Chapter*, has advanc'd an *Hypotheſis*, which, as it does not affect his *General Scheme*, cou'd not properly be taken notice of in the courſe of my *Remarks* upon it. But, as I think it ought not to paſs unexamin'd, I beg leave to detain the Reader a little longer, whilſt I preſent him with a ſhort view of the *Notion itſelf*, and the reaſons, why I apprehend the Author to be miſtaken in it.

The deſign of the *whole Chapter* is to ſhew, " That not only the *matter* " of God's Laws, but the *Penalties* an- " nex'd to them, are for the *Good* of " mankind, *even of thoſe, who ſuffer for* " *the breach of them.*"

The

The Subſtance of our Author's Reaſoning in proof of this Propoſition is as follows. " God does not make *Laws* " for *one end*, and require the obſerving " of them for *another* — As it was *for* " *the ſake of Man* he gave him Laws, " ſo he executes them *for the ſame Rea-* " *ſon*; ſince *upon his own account* he " can't be in the leaſt affected, whether " his Laws be, or be not, obſerv'd; " and, conſequently, in *puniſhing*, no " more than *rewarding*, does he act as " a *Party*, much leſs as an *injur'd* " *Party*, who wants *Satisfaction*, or Re- " paration of Honour — To ſuppoſe " God puniſhes to vindicate his Ho- " nour, as a *Legiſlator*, or, as the breach " of his Laws is an Injury done to " Him, takes off from that Eſteem " and Love Men muſt have for him, " did they believe he only puniſh'd, " *when*, and *no farther than*, their " Good requir'd — *Jealouſy* in point " of Honour or Power muſt as neceſ- " ſarily be excluded from an unlimit- " ed and abſolutely perfect Being, as " *Anger*, *Revenge*, and ſuch like Paſſions " — The Effects of *Divine Juſtice* " muſt not only be for the Good of " *others*, but *even of the Perſons puniſh'd.* " All Puniſhment for *Puniſhment's ſake*

" is

" is meerly Cruelty and Malice; and " therefore whatever *Puniſhment* he in- " flicts muſt be *a Mark* of his *Love*, " and deſign'd for our *Amendment* — " As God's infinite *Goodneſs* appears in " the *Sanctions*, as well as the *matter* " of his *Laws*; ſo his Infinite *Wiſdom* " knows how to *adjuſt* the *Puniſh-* " *ment* to the *offence*, ſo as *exactly* to " produce the *deſir'd Amendment*.

I have quoted thus much of our Author's ſentiments in this *Chapter*, not that I think the *whole* of his reaſoning *falſe*; but becauſe the *Hypotheſis*, laid down in the latter part, is plainly connected with, and deſign'd to follow as a conſequence from, the Reaſoning advanc'd in the former. Now our Author is certainly thus far right, that God does not *require the obſerving of his Laws* for any *Ends*, *different* from thoſe, for which he firſt gave them; as it is equally true, that the *Breach* of his Laws is no *real Injury* to him; and that when we deſcribe him as a *Jealous God*, we expreſs our ſelves as much in *metaphor*, as when we repreſent him as *angry*, or *revengeful*. But his miſtake lies in ſuppoſing, that " The " effects of divine Juſtice *(univerſally*; " for he makes no particular excep- " tions,)

" tions,) muſt not only be for the " Good of *others*, but *even of the Per-* " *ſons puniſh'd*;" and that " the infinite " wiſdom of God knows how to *ad-* " *juſt* the *Puniſhment* to the *offence*, ſo " as *exactly* to produce the *deſir'd Amend-* " *ment*.

Now, tho' it may be true, that Puniſhment is *often* for the Good *even* of *thoſe*, who ſuffer it; and that it *may* be ſo *adjuſted*, as to produce the deſir'd *Amendment*; yet, that it cannot be *univerſally true* (as this Gentleman has here laid it down) will appear, by applying the notion to the Puniſhment of ſinners *in this Life*, the *Temporal Judgments*, with which Providence ſometimes viſits the Guilty in this world.

Now, that They may be, and certainly are, in general, *intended*, not only to deter *others* from violating the Laws of God, but to reclaim and *amend* the *offending* Perſon; and therefore are as much deſign'd for the *Sinners* Good, as for that of *others*, there can be no doubt. But however rightly *adjuſted* the Nature and degree of the Puniſhment may be to produce the *deſir'd Amendment*, it is too true, that this effect does not *always* follow from it.

it. The Arm of Juſtice may fall upon an *abandon'd*, deſperate, wretch, inſenſible, not only to the milder checks of conſcience, but even to the *ſmart* of *Affliction itſelf*, and the *loud warnings* of *actual Puniſhment*. Now, if *one neceſſary End* of Puniſhment be the *Amendment* of the *offending Perſon*; and, if God be ſuppos'd (as certainly he muſt) to *know the Hearts* of all men; how will you reconcile the puniſhment of an *harden'd*, incorrigible, Sinner with the infinite wiſdom and Goodneſs of God? Muſt he not *foreknow*, that the Puniſhment will not have its proper effect? And if he never puniſhes, but with a deſign of *amending* the Sinner, how can he ever puniſh, where he is *ſure* the Sinner *cannot be amended?* If, therefore, ſuch *wretches* are ever the objects of divine Juſtice, in this world (as I think there is no doubt but they ſometimes are) they muſt be *exceptions* to the *general Rule*, and *one* great *end* of puniſhment be entirely *loſt* upon them. Thus this *Hypotheſis* is not *univerſally true*, when apply'd to the Puniſhments of *this Life*. With regard to thoſe of *another Life*, As the notion is plainly intended to *ſtrike at the Eternity of Hell-Torments*

ments (a Queſtion, which the Author himſelf reſerves the diſcuſſion of to a *properer time)* I ſhall not at preſent enter into the diſpute; and ſhall only obſerve, that he ſeems to have borrow'd his Hypotheſis from the *Platonick Notion* of the Puniſhments of *Hell*, thus beautiful deſcrib'd by *Virgil*, in the perſon of old *Anchiſes*.

Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumque malorum
Supplicia expendunt; aliæ panduntur inanes
Suſpenſæ ad ventos; aliis ſub gurgite vaſto
Infectum eluitur ſcelus, aut exuritur igni.
Quiſque ſuos patimur manes: exinde per amplum
Mittimur Elyſium, & pauci læta arva tenemus.
Donec longa dies, perfecto temporis orbe,
Concretam exemit labem, purumque reliquit
Æthereum ſenſum, atque aurai ſimplicis ignem.

Æn. l. 6. lin. 739.

For this are various Penances enjoin'd;
And ſome are hung to bleach upon the wind;
Some plung'd in waters, others plung'd in fires;
Till all the dregs are drain'd, *and* all the ruſt expires.

All have their Manes, *and thoſe* Manes *bear* ;
The Few, ſo cleans'd, to the Abodes repair,
And breath, in ample fields, the ſoft Elyſian Air.
Then are they happy, when, by length of time,
The ſcurf is worn away of each *committed* Crime.
No ſpeck is left of their habitual Stains,
But the pure Æther *of the* Soul *remains.*

F I N I S.

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CHRISTIANITY

Distinct from the

Religion of *Nature*,

In ANSWER

To a late Book, Entitled,

Christianity as Old as the Creation, &c.

IN my *firſt Part*, I under-took to examine our Author's *General Hypotheſis*, that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion differ only in the manner of their being communicated* to mankind; *the one* (Natural Religion) *being the Internal, as the other* (Reveal'd Religion) nothing more than *the External Revelation of the ſame unchangeable Will of a Being, who is at all times infinitely wiſe and good.* And my reaſon was, becauſe This Hypotheſis, under colour of *reconciling* Reveal'd Religion with Natural, is plainly intended to ſet aſide the former as of no uſe or advantage to Mankind.

But, ſhou'd we allow our Author his Hypotheſis, I cannot ſee, that the Cauſe of *Deiſm* wou'd be much the better

for it. For let *Reveal'd* Religion be *nothing more* than *Natural.* What then? Still *Revelation* will have its Uſe; as it will be both an *Eaſier*, and a *more expeditious* way of conveying the will of God to us, than the *ſlow* deductions, and operations, of *unaſſiſted Reaſon.*

Our Author may boaſt, as much as he pleaſes, of the *great Plainneſs* and *Perſpicuity* of the *Religion* of *Nature:* it is certain Mankind never did (and it is thence probable never cou'd) arrive at a tolerable *Syſtem* of *moral Truths*, without long Thought, and great Application of mind. The Study of *Morality* was always eſteem'd the proper buſineſs of the *Philoſopher*, the Man of leiſure and retirement, which implies ſomething in it not ſo readily and eaſily to be attain'd by vulgar minds, as this Gentleman wou'd have us imagin.

Now I wou'd ask our Author himſelf, whether he does not think, that the *Bulk of Mankind*, however capable he may ſuppoſe each particular Man to be of forming to himſelf a Syſtem of morality, was not greatly aſſiſted in attaining to the knowledge of *moral truths* by the Teaching and Inſtruction of the *Philoſophers?* Whether he does not think, that the Writings of thoſe great

great Men contributed to the more *eaſy* and *quick* propagation of *Natural Religion* in the World? If he thinks not, let him go to the yet *barbarous* and unciviliz'd Nations of the World, and ſee what progreſs Morality, and Natural Religion, make among them, in compariſon to its advances in the polite States of *Greece* and *Rome*.

It is related of the celebrated *Monſieur Paſcal*, one of the greateſt *Geniuſes* of *France*, that, by the meer ſtrength of his natural faculties, without having ever ſeen or read any Book of *Geometry*, he diſcover'd the Science himſelf, and advanc'd in it as far as the 32d *Propoſition* of the *firſt* Book of *Euclid*. *

* *The ſtory being very remarkable, it may not be unpleaſant to the Reader to ſee the following account of it.*
" Comme le ſoin que Monſieur ſon pere avoit eu de
" lui cacher toutes ces choſes avoit eti ſi grand, qu'il
" n'en ſavoit pas même les noms, il fut contraint de
" ſe faire lui-meme des definitions. Il appelloit une
" cercle, une rond, une ligne, une barre; & ainſi des
" autres. Apres ces definitions, il ſe ſit des axiomes;
" & enfin il ſit des demonſtrations parfaites: & comme
" l'on va de l'un à l'autre dans cette ſcience, il pouſſa
" ſes recherches ſi avant, qu'il en vint juſqu' à la 32.
" propoſition du premier livre d' Euclide ——
" *As the care, which his Father took to conceal every*
" *thing of this ſort* (Mathematicks) *from him, was ſo*
" *great, that he was even ignorant of their names, he*
" *was oblig'd to make* Definitions *himſelf. He call'd a*
" Circle

But will any one ſay, he wou'd not with greater eaſe and expedition have arriv'd to ſuch a knowledge in *Geometrical* Learning, had he been aſſiſted by the diſcoveries, which *Euclid* had before made in that Science? The ſame is true in the Science of *Morality*. However capable each particular Man may be of diſcovering it for himſelf, yet his enquiries will be greatly *aſſiſted* by the labours and improvements of thoſe, who have gone before him in the Study of it.

But does not all this conclude much more ſtrongly for the Uſe of *Revelation*; which, by giving us, at one view, a *compleat* and *uniform Syſtem* of *Morality*, which we may certainly truſt to, muſt greatly facilitate our Enquiries into *Religious Truths?* The *Religion* of *Nature*, I ſay, will be much ſooner and better underſtood, by reading *One Book*, written by the direction, and under the influence of *God* himſelf, than by ſearching after it thro' the diffe-

" Circle *a* Round, *A* Line *a* Bar, *and ſo of the reſt.* " *After theſe definitions, he laid down certain* Axioms; " *and at laſt he made compleat* Demonſtrations. *And,* " *going on from one to another, in this Science, he car-* " *ried his enquires ſo far, as to arrive at the* 32d. *Pro-* " *poſition of the firſt Book of* Euclid. ———
Traitez de l'Equilibre, par M. *Paſcal.* Pref.

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rent Syſtems of a Variety of Authors; in which too the mind *may* be diſtracted in its choice amidſt the ſeveral *Sects* of *Philoſophy*, and divided between the *Stoick*, the *Academick*, and the *Epicurean*. So that, ſhou'd we allow our Author his Hypotheſis, that *Natural and Reveal'd Religion differ only in the manner of their being communicated*, yet ſtill the Conſequence he wou'd inſinuate, that therefore *Revelation* is of *no uſe*, will by no means follow, ſince this advantage will plainly attend it, that the Knowledge even of *Natural* Religion itſelf will, by its aſſiſtance, be render'd at once more *eaſy*, and more *expeditious*.

But, becauſe *Chriſtianity*, as a *particular Revelation*, is concern'd in the diſpute; a Revelation, which undoubtedly *differs* in ſome reſpects from meer *Natural* Religion, I thought it proper to begin with expoſing the fallacy of a *Scheme*, which wou'd deſtroy all difference between them. With which view, I endeavour'd to ſhew, that the Suppoſition of a *Revelation* having been *actually* given to the World might be improv'd into a very good Argument, *a priori*, why *Reveal'd* Religion ſhou'd, in ſome reſpects, *differ* from *Natural*.

But,

But, to go to the bottom of the matter, I proceeded to enquire into the true Notion of the *Perfection* of the *Religion* of *Nature*, the grand ſupport of this Gentleman's Hypotheſis; and I have ſhewn it to be *perfect* in ſuch a ſenſe, as to be very conſiſtent with the Uſe of *Revelation*; the *Expediency* of which is founded, not in any *real defect* in the *Law of Nature*, conſider'd as a *Rule of Life* (which muſt be *Sufficient*, if duly attended to, for all the purpoſes of Human Happineſs) but in the manifeſt *corruption*, and *depravity*, of *Natural Reaſon*. Thus far, then, we have already advanc'd (and I hope ſucceſsfully) in the preſent Controverſy.

I go on, therefore, to offer to the Reader, in this *ſecond part*, a ſhort *Apology* for the *Poſitive Inſtitutions* of Religion; which, our Author has thrown out of *his* Scheme for reaſons, which are very manifeſt.

For if the Goſpel has commanded any *Poſitive Duties*, this will conſtitute a very material *Difference* between *Natural* and *Reveal'd* Religion, and conſequently be an unanſwerable Objection to his general *Hypotheſis*.

Accord-

Accordingly He introduces *B.* objecting, that " ſome things might be " requir'd by God, as *Governor of the* " *Univerſe*, which are meerly *Poſitive*; " nay that *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, *Signs*, " and *Symbols*, might be *arbitrarily en-* " *joyn'd*, and ſo intermix'd with mat- " ters of morality, as to oblige the " conſciences of all Men at all times:" upon which our Author joins iſſue, and ſays " This alone is the Point, which " muſt decide the Queſtion, *whether* " *Natural and Reveal'd Religion do real-* " *ly differ.* (p. 114.)

It is obvious to remark, however the Author may ſeem willing to diſguiſe his meaning, that he wou'd make his good friend *B.* inſinuate, that the Believers of *Revelation* refer all the Virtue and Excellency of *Poſitive Duties* to the *abſolute Dominion*, and *arbitrary* Injunction, of *God*; ſeparate from any *wiſe* or *good end*, which may be anſwer'd by ſuch injunctions; whereas the contrary is the Truth of the Caſe: The *Poſitive* Duties, preſcrib'd by Revelation, tho', excluſive of the command of God, they lay no Obligation on Mankind to the performance of them, muſt yet be ſuppos'd to be wiſely and properly adapted to the circumſtances

ſtances of Human Nature, and to contribute, mediately or immediately to the Good and Happineſs of Mankind: as will appear to be in fact true, when we come to conſider ſome of the *Poſitive Inſtitutions* both of the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian OEconomy*.

When, therefore, he asks " Can " God iſſue out certain commands, " which have no foundation in rea- " ſon?" I anſwer, he cannot; if, by *having no foundation in reaſon*, he means having no tendency, no ſubſerviency to human Virtue and Happineſs. But how will this help him, unleſs he can ſhew, that the Poſitive Inſtitutions of Reveal'd Religion are really ſuch commands?

This State of the queſtion gives us, I think, a juſt Idea of the *Nature*, and *Obligation*, of *Poſitive* Duties, and, at the ſame time, puts our Enquiries concerning them upon a right foot. *Poſitive Duties* are really, and in the nature of things, *diſtinct* from *Natural Religion*. They are, properly, the *Inſtituted Means of Religion*, not *Religion itſelf*; the Handmaids to *Virtue*, and ſubſervient to *Morality*, not, in *their own nature*, either *virtuous*, or *moral*. Abſtracted from the conſideration of their

their *Religious Uſe*, they are perfectly *indifferent* Actions; but take Religion into the queſtion, and their *relative connection* with it, and they immediately become obligatory on the conſciences of men.

To inſtance in a *Poſitive* Precept of the *Goſpel*; *Eating bread and drinking wine* is, in its own nature, and excluſive of the command of God, with reſpect to Religion, an *Indifferent Action*; but, when we are commanded to *do this in remembrance of* the Author of our Religion, as a grateful *Commemoration* of the benefits we have receiv'd from him, and in order to a frequent Renewal of our Obligations to the practice of Religion and Virtue, Who is there, that does not ſee the connection of this *Rite* with Virtue and Happineſs, and conſequently, the divine command ſuppos'd, the obligation incumbent on us to the performance of it?

But this Notion of *Poſitive* Duties will not help our Author, or in the leaſt favour his Hypotheſis, that *ſuch Duties* cannot be *a Part of Religion*. Whether They be *Real Religion*, or but the *Means* to it, is not the queſtion between us. The point in diſpute is,

Whether Poſitive Precepts are fit to be the ſubject matter of Revelation:

And, in order to determine this matter, let us conſider the Corruption and *depravity* of Human Nature, and how unlikely it is, that *Religion*, or, if you will, the practice of *moral Virtue*, ſhou'd in any tolerable degree be ſupported in the world, without ſome ſuch *Inſtituted Means*, as I am here contending for. The Mind of Man requires frequently to be *awaken'd* to the practice of Religion, to be *alarm'd*, and rouz'd from that *Careleſſneſs* and Inattention, it is too apt to fall into — It has ever been the practice of the Wiſeſt *Legiſlators*, who were ſenſible of this weakneſs of our Nature, to guard Religion by *Poſitive* Inſtitutions, and to enforce and ſtrengthen its obligations by the *ſtated returns* of certain *ritual* and ceremonial obſervances. And I cannot doubt, but the too general Neglect of the *Chriſtian Inſtitutions* is one great cauſe of that *Spirit of Licentiouſneſs*, that is gone out among us.

Now I wou'd ſubmit the following Argument to this *great Maſter* of *Reaſon*. *Poſitive* Precepts, I ſay, are of uſe in ſecuring the intereſts of Religion and Virtue; and he himſelf, in effect, confeſſes

ſeſſes the ſame, for he lays it down (*p.* 115.) that *Human Diſcretion* ought to *determine* concerning them (*i. e.* appoint ſuch Poſitive Inſtitutions) *as it thinks moſt conducing to thoſe things, which are, in their own nature, obligatory.* Now, if it be proper for *Human Reaſon*, left to itſelf, to appoint ſome ſuch duties, it is an argument, *à fortiori*, why God Almighty may, conſiſtently with his wiſdom and goodneſs, interpoſe in the directing and preſcribing them, ſince *infinite wiſdom* cannot fail, amidſt the variety of *Means*, to make choice of the *propereſt*, and as the *Authority* of God himſelf ſtamp'd upon them will more effectually engage the obedience of mankind, than the ſtrongeſt ſanctions of meer *Human Laws.*

But, more fully to evince the great *uſe* and Expediency of theſe Duties in ſecuring the Intereſts of true Religion and virtue, let us take a ſhort view of two or three of the *Poſitive* Inſtitutions of *Reveal'd Religion*; and ſee, whether they deſerve the opprobrious character of meer *arbitrary* commands; or, on the contrary, carry the plain marks of wiſdom and goodneſs in their Inſtitution.

To begin with that *Revelation*, which God made of his will to the *Jews* from Mount *Sinai*, contain'd in the *Decalogue*, or *Ten Commandments*: This was unqueſtionably A *Republication of the Law of Nature*, as it contains the Subſtance of *Natural Religion*, in our duty to God, and One another, founded upon the ſtricteſt Principles of Right Reaſon. There is, however, in it *One* Command (and One only) of a *Poſitive* Nature; namely the Inſtitution of the *Sabbath*, or Obſervation of the *Seventh day*; the reaſon of which Inſtitution is expreſs'd in the concluſion of the Commandment, in theſe words:

For in Six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, — and reſted the Seventh day; wherefore the Lord bleſſed the Seventh day, and hallowed it. (Exod. c. 20. *v.* 11.)

This reaſon ſuggeſts to us the *Propriety* of the Inſtitution. It was appointed as a *memorial* of the *Creation of the World*; in the *true Hiſtory* of which, *Moſes*, the Teacher and *Lawgiver* of the *Jews*, had inſtructed that People. And, when we conſider how prone the *Jews* were to *Idolatry*, we ſhall immediately perceive the *Uſe* and Subſerviency of the *Sabbath* to the cauſe

cauſe of Religion, in putting that People conſtantly in mind of the *One* only and *True God*, *Creator* of Heaven and Earth.

But this is not all. There is a reaſon for the obſervation of the *Sabbath*, not peculiar to the *Jews*, or ariſing from any particular circumſtances of that People; but founded in the Temper and Diſpoſition of *Mankind in general*. I mean the natural *Careleſneſs* and Inattention of Men in the great buſineſs of Religion; which makes it highly expedient there ſhou'd be *ſtated ſeaſons*, conſtantly and regularly returning, for the exerciſe of *Religious Worſhip*; which wou'd, otherwiſe, be in great danger of being very ſeldom perform'd, if not entirely neglected.

As to the numerous *Rites* and *Ceremonies* of the *Jewiſh* Religion, I ſhall take no notice of them in this place. The *Propriety* of any one *Poſitive* Inſtitution of *Reveal'd* Religion, ſuch as That of the *Jewiſh Sabbath*, is a ſufficient *Demonſtration* againſt this Author's Scheme. However I cannot but obſerve, that, if this Gentleman thinks the *Jewiſh Law* unworthy of having God for it's Author, conſider'd as *Governor of the Univerſe*, he cannot decently

cently quarrel with any one, who ſhou'd refer it to him as *Temporal Legiſlator* of the *Jews*; if he remembers his own aſſertion *(p.* 113.) that God, " in taking the civil adminiſtration of " their affairs upon him, acted not as " Governor of the Univerſe, but by a " Power deriv'd to him from the peo- " ple by Virtue of the *Horeb* Cove- " nant."

CHRISTIANITY knows of but *Two Inſtitutions* of a *Poſitive* Nature, univerſally obligatory on all its Profeſſors: and Thoſe are The *Euchariſt*, or Sacrament of the *Lord*'s *Supper*, and *Baptiſm*; the Reaſonableneſs of which is ſo very plain and obvious, that it is almoſt ſuperfluous, (were it not to prevent all poſſibility of caviling) to ſpend any time in the proof of it.

The *Euchariſt* appears to have been inſtituted, as a *Perpetual Memorial* of the *Death*, and *Sufferings*, of *Jeſus Chriſt*. It was appointed by Himſelf, a little before he ſubmitted to the obſtinate Fury, and implacable malice of the *Jews*. In the performance of this Rite, we ſolemnly recollect what He did, and ſuffer'd for us: we commemorate the great advantage we receiv'd from

from his appearance on Earth: We renew the obligations we are under to the Practice of Virtue and Goodneſs, which He came to reſtore; and we join to this Solemn Recollection of our Duty, our fervent Prayers to God for his aſſiſtance in the performance of it. Now I wou'd ask any impartial Man, What is there Unreaſonable, What is there ſuperſtitious in all this? What is there, which does not remarkably and evidently tend to the improvement of of Piety and Virtue?

It has ever been the practice of the the politeſt People gratefully to *commemorate* (and that publickly and frequently) Thoſe *Benefactors* of their Country, Thoſe Gods on Earth, from whom they depriv'd any great and *National* Advantages. And the practice is founded in common ſenſe and reaſon.

For It is certainly of great Advantage to the intereſts of Virtue frequently to ſet before mankind the moſt *illuſtrous Examples* of it, in order to fire their minds to an imitation of ſuch Excellency. If then the *Hero* is warm'd by the *Example* of a *Cæſar*, The *Patriot* by That of a *Brutus*, can the *Chriſtian* faint in the Race of Virtue, when ſo bright an *Exemplar* of it is

ſet

ſet before him in the perſon of his Saviour? When we recollect the painful Life this *divine Teacher* led in the cauſe of Religion and Virtue; the ſufferings he chearfully underwent for our ſakes; When we ſee every grace and every virtue of the Human Mind ſhining forth in his conduct: when we reflect ſeriouſly on theſe things, can we help being in love with virtue? *Et dubitamus adhuc?* —— Beſides, is not each ſolemn *Renewal* of our Obligations a freſh *Bar* to the Attacks of Vice, of Immorality? —— In ſhort, is not the practice of this *Rite*, this *Ceremony*, this *Poſitive Duty* (call it what you will) evidently for the intereſt of True Religion and Virtue? In the Light I have here ſet it, it appears to me a moſt *rational*, and moſt *excellent Inſtitution*, and highly worthy of having *God* for its *Author*.

Then as to the other *Sacrament*, the Inſtitution of *Baptiſm*, It is a *publick* and *Solemn Initiation* into the *Religion* of *Jeſus Chriſt*; It is *enrolling* our ſelves in the liſt of his *Diſciples*; It is *taking the oaths* (if I may be allow'd the Expreſſion) to Him, as to our *Spiritual King*, and *Maſter*, the *Sacramentum militare*, which every *Soldier of Jeſus Chriſt*

Chriſt is oblig'd to take; and ſtands, at leaſt, upon the ſame foot of reaſonableneſs with the like Obligations to an *Earthly Prince* or *Commander* —— It may be the Free-thinker's boaſt, that he is

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magiſtri.

But methinks he ought to except *God*'s *Word*, which muſt be *infallible*, and not, like the *doctrines* of meer *Human Teachers*, liable to *Error* and *Uncertainty*.

Such are the *Poſitive Duties* of the *Chriſtian Religion*; one or two plain Precepts, of excellent uſe in their conſequences, and attended with no difficulties in the performance of them —— As to Acts of *mortification* and *abſtinence*, recommended in the *Goſpel*, tho' they are left to Human Diſcretion, when, and in what manner they are to be perform'd, yet have they a plain and evident uſe. For, if it be of advantage to a Chriſtian to retire now and then from the world, to ſhut out the cares of Life, in order ſeriouſly to examine and look back upon his paſt conduct, with a view of correcting what

is amiſs, of ſupplying what is defective, and of raiſing and exalting his mind above wordly things, by a ſilent, uninterrupted, contemplation of God and his Greatneſs, What better *Preparative*, than ſuch a *ſparing* and *moderate* uſe of *Food*, as ſhall adminiſter no fewel to the troubleſome Paſſions of *Anger*, *Luſt*, or the like?

What I have hitherto advanc'd concerning the Nature and Obligation of *Poſitive Duties in general*, together with the ſhort view I have given the Reader of the excellent *Uſe* and *Intent* of ſome of the *particular* Duties of this kind, preſcrib'd by *Reveal'd Religion*, might, I think, be a ſufficient *Apology* for them. But, to wreſt the Weapon entirely from the hand of this *Adverſary* of *Reveal'd* Religion, I go on to conſider the moſt material *Objections* he he has rais'd againſt *Poſitive* Duties; and which he has diſpos'd under the two following general Propoſitions.

Firſt, That *God does not act arbitrarily, or interpoſe unneceſſarily, but leaves thoſe things, which can only be conſider'd as Means (and, as ſuch, are, in their own nature mutable) to Human Diſcretion, to determin, as it thinks moſt conducing to thoſe things, which*

are

are in their own nature obligatory. (p. 115.)

Secondly, that *The ſuppoſing Things meerly Poſitive to be made the Ingredients of Religion, is inconſiſtent with the Good of mankind, as well as the Honour of God.* (p. 141.)

In proof of the Firſt of theſe Propoſitions, he begins with obſerving the *Ill uſe*, which may be made of ſuch Inſtitutions, and " the Handle de-" ſigning Men may from thence take " to impoſe upon weak perſons what " they pleaſe, on pretence of divine " right *(p.* 116.) —— there being no-" thing ſo indifferent, but may, if be-" liev'd to have divinity ſtamp'd upon " it, be perverted by deſigning men to " the vileſt purpoſes." *(p.* 117.) and, as a proof, that this has actually been the caſe among *Chriſtians*, he inſtances in many *ſuperſtitious* rites and ceremonies, that have crept into Religion, particularly the *Exorciſms*, *Abſolutions*, and *Extreme Unctions*, of the *Romaniſts* —— But what of all this? Was the *Abuſe* of a Thing ever eſteem'd by impartial Men a good Argument againſt the *Uſe* of it? — Shou'd I viſit a *ſick* perſon, and very gravely tell him, that The Practice of *Phyſick* had *given a*

Handle to deſigning Men to impoſe on weak People what they pleaſe, on pretence of reſtoring them to Health; and, as a proof of this, ſhou'd enumerate the many *pretended remedies* daily offer'd to the publick, and harangue very pathetically on the irregular, pernicious, practice of *Quacks*, wou'd he think this a good argument againſt the uſe of *Medicine*, or a ſufficient reaſon, why he ſhou'd not conſult the Learned, and Regular, *Phyſician?* I leave the application of this with our Author; and go on to

Another *Objection*; taken from the *Nature* of the Duties themſelves. They are repreſented as *perfectly Indifferent* Actions; and conſequently *improper* objects of the *Divine Command*—— I have, in part, anticipated the anſwer to this objection, by ſhewing that ſuch Duties may, and actually have, a tendency to ſecure the intereſts of Religion and Virtue, and conſequently are not *perfectly Indifferent* Actions. I ſhall only add in this place, that the foundation of this Author's miſtake lies in barely conſidering the *external, formal*, Action itſelf, without taking in its natural *conſequences*, and viewing it as *connected* with, and *related* to, ſome *purpoſed End.*

That

That an Action, *perfectly Indifferent in itſelf*, may be *accidentally connected* with ſome certain *Good* to be attain'd, there can be no doubt to any one, who reflects on the nature of *Civil Government*; in the adminiſtration of which many actions, which wou'd be *perfectly indifferent in a ſtate of Nature*, become ſo *connected* with the *Good* of *Society*, as to be the proper objects of *Human Laws*; and, of conſequence, when eſtabliſh'd by the *Legiſlature*, ceaſe to be *Indifferent* Actions. Why the ſame may not be true in the œconomy of Providence, I cannot apprehend; and it ſeems to me a very bold limitation of *God*'s *Juriſdiction* to deny him that Power, which you ſcruple not to allow the *Civil Magiſtrate*.

And, therefore, his whole reaſoning againſt *Poſitive Duties*, founded on the ſuppos'd *Indifference* of their *Nature*, falls to the ground —— That " Whatſoever is in itſelf indifferent, whether " as to matter, or manner, muſt be ſo " to an All-wiſe Being, who judges of " things, as they are; and for the ſame " reaſon, that he commands things, " which are good, and forbids thoſe, " which are evil, he leaves men at li- " berty in all things indifferent; " *(p.* 122.)

122.) is very true; but does not affect the point in diſpute; unleſs the performance of ſuch duties, as are the ſubject of the preſent controverſy, cou'd be prov'd to be neither *Good*, nor *Evil*, in *itſelf*, or its *conſequences* —— For the ſame reaſon it is as little to the purpoſe to obſerve, that " Things, which are " of no value in themſelves, can be " no motives to an All-wiſe Being to " puniſh us; or to clog our happineſs " with any ſuch needleſs obſervances" *(ibid)* ſince the *Poſitive Inſtitutions* of Religion, tho' of *no value in themſelves*, may yet be *beneficial* in their *effects*.

A *Third*, and indeed a notable, Argument againſt *Poſitive* Duties is, that there are No ſuch in the *Religion* of *Angels*. " If (ſays he) in Heaven there " is no room for arbitrary Precepts, " to encumber that Moral Goodneſs, " which is the ſole buſineſs of the Bleſt " Above; what ſhou'd hinder us, did " we but make That too our only con- " cern here, from enjoying a ſort of " Heaven on Earth, free from all ty- " rannical Impoſitions and endleſs Quar- " rels about indifferent things?" —— Sometimes this Gentleman is ſo complaiſant, as to allow us theſe *Means* to Religion, provided the Appointment of them

them be left to *Human Diſcretion*; but now, it ſeems, they are inconſiſtent with his *Heaven upon Earth*, his *chimerical Paradiſe*.

Quo teneam vultus mutantem Protea nodo?

But let me ask him, How is he ſure that *Moral Goodneſs*, as he ſtyles it, is *The Only Concern of the Bleſt, Above*; and that *in Heaven there is no room for arbitrary* (i. e. Poſitive) *Precepts?* I fancy he will ſcarce pretend a *particular Revelation* concerning it. For my own part, I ſhall never be ſo hardy, as to aſſert, there can be no Duties, of a *Poſitive* Nature, enjoin'd the *attendant Train* of Heaven itſelf; nor will I pretend to demonſtrate, but there may be *particular Forms* of *Adoration*, &c. conſtantly obſerv'd by the *Heavenly Choir*; ſince *Angels*, as well as *Men*, are *dependent* Beings, tho' of a higher and more exalted *Claſs*. But however this be (which can never be known by us, till we join the cæleſtial Choir our ſelves, or by expreſs Revelation) No Argument can be fairly drawn from the Nature of *Angels* to that of *Men*. Let this Author prove Mankind to be ſuch Beings, as we ſuppoſe *Angels* to be,

be, and we will give him up the *Poſitive* Duties of our Religion; but, till this can be ſhewn, It will not, I think, be our Intereſt to part with theſe Helps to virtue, theſe ſupports of our frail and imperfect Nature.

Again, " If ſuch things (ſays he) as " have no worth or excellency (i. e. " Poſitive Duties) can contribute to " the worth, or excellency of Reli- " gion; the more they abounded, the " more excellent wou'd Religion be; " which yet is ſo far from being true, " even in the opinion of thoſe, who " contend for ſuch things, that even " they, when they are to ſhew the Ex- " cellency of the Chriſtian Religion, " recommend it for having but few of " thoſe things; which is ſuppoſing it " loſes of its excellency, in proportion " to what it has of this nature; and " that they have a more honourable " conception of it, who believe it has " no ſuch mixture to ſpoil its beauty; " but that, like its Author, it is whol- " ly Spiritual, and, as ſuch, worthy its " divine original." *(p.* 123.)

Can we believe this Author in earneſt? Did ever ſuch ſhallow *Sophiſtry* fall from the pen of a Pretender to Reaſon? We recommend *Chriſtianity*,

it

it is true, for having but *Few* Duties of a *Poſitive* Nature, in oppoſition to the *numerous*, and burthenſome, Rites of *Judaiſm*, and the ſtill heavier weight of *Gentile Superſtition*. We recommend it as preſcribing *no more* of this kind, than is *neceſſary* for the *preſervation* of *Religion*. But is this *ſuppoſing Religion looſes of its Excellency, in proportion to what it has of this nature?* Quite the contrary: It ſuppoſes nothing *ſuperfluous*, nothing *defective*, in the *Chriſtian* Inſtitution —— If our Author does not ſee the abſurdity of this manner of reaſoning in the preſent caſe, let him try it in one more familiar. For inſtance; The *Garments*, we wear, contribute to the *convenience*, and *decency*, of our bodies. But wou'd it not be ridiculous to aſſert, that, therefore, *the more they abounded*, or the more *cloaths* we heap'd on, the more convenient and decent, it wou'd be? And why is not the abſurdity the ſame in the preſent caſe? *Poſitive Duties* may be conſider'd as the *Habits*, the *Cloathing*, of Religion; and it is the peculiar excellency of the *Chriſtian*, that it ſhuns the *gaudy trappings* of *Superſtition*; and that its *Garb* is *modeſt*, and *decent*, beyond that of all other Religions in the world.

After what has been already ſaid in vindication of *Poſitive Inſtitutions*, and their *ſubſerviency* to Religion, I need but juſt mention the next *objection*; which is, that " If God's works ſhew " infinite wiſdom, there's no reaſon to " imagin but his Laws do the ſame; " but then (adds our Author) they muſt " be *moral* Laws; for theſe alone can " ſpeak his wiſdom, as plainly, to all " mankind, as his works do." *(p.* 124.) —In which there are two things taken for granted, and both without reaſon. The firſt is, that the wiſdom of *all* God's Laws *muſt* be *equally* clear to the apprehenſions of men; which I defy him to prove; it being far from *neceſſary*, that *Human Reaſon* ſhou'd ſee thro' the *whole œconomy* of *divine Providence.* The Second is, that the characters of *wiſdom* cannot *poſſibly* appear ſo plain in the *Poſitive*, as in the *Moral*, Laws of God; which I will venture to aſſert is far from being an *Axiom*; and, till our Author has demonſtrated the truth of it, muſt paſs for a meer *Petitio Principii.*

But the Next is an *Objection* of ſomewhat more importance, and ſtands thus. " If we ſuppoſe any arbitrary commands " in the Goſpel, we place Chriſtians in

" a

" a worſe condition, than thoſe under " no Law but that of Nature; which " requires nothing but what is moral; " and conſequently the greateſt part of " mankind, who are to be judg'd by " the Law they do know, and not by " the Law they do not know, are, on " this ſuppoſition, in a better condition, " as to the next world, than Chriſtians; " becauſe they do not hazard the fa- " vour of God by any miſtakes, or " omiſſions, in ſuch matters." *(p.* 125.)

I need not repeat, that by *arbitrary commands* he everywhere intends *Poſitive* Inſtitutions; but the Reader is left to judge, whether the *Chriſtian* deſerve ſo harſh an Appellation. —— But the Fallacy of this objection lies in conſidering *the greateſt part of mankind* as *under no Law but that of Nature.* By *the greateſt part of mankind* I will venture to ſuppoſe he means all thoſe, who never heard of the *Goſpel Revelation.* But, if he knows any thing of the Hiſtory of mankind, he muſt be appriz'd, that, in every nation, in any tolerable degree *civiliz'd*, ſuch *Religious Duties* have been *inſtituted*, as were ſuited, to the beſt of the Inſtitutor's judgment, to ſecure the practice of moral virtue: Witneſs the *Religious Ceremonies*, &c. of

Numa, *Lycurgus*, and other famous *Law-givers*; ſo that the *greateſt part of mankind*, properly ſpeaking, have always been under *ſome other Law*, beſides that of *meer Nature*, ſome *Poſitive Law* of *Religion*; a ſtrong preſumption, that mankind have ever ſtood in need of ſuch helps to the practice of Virtue. Now, if the *Poſitive* Duties of the *Chriſtian* Religion are infinitely more *eaſy* to be perform'd, and more accommodate to the end propos'd, than Thoſe of any other *inſtituted Religion*, it will follow, contrary to our Author's aſſertion, that *Chriſtians*, even in this reſpect, are in a *better condition*, than thoſe *under no Law* (as he fallaciouſly expreſſes it) *but that of Nature*.

But, farther ſtill, The ſuppoſition of Poſitive Precepts being a part of Religion is, according to this Gentleman, " to ſuppoſe a change of mind in God; " and then (ſays he) where will you " ſtop? For, if Changeableneſs were not " a perfection, it wou'd not be in him, " and, if all his perfections be infinite, " muſt not This be ſo too?" (*p.* 131.) The poor Gentleman is terribly afraid, that if we admit any *Poſitive* Precepts as God's Will, we ſhall make ſo *change-*

able

able a *Being* of him, as not to be ſure of his will for twenty four hours together. An *Infinitely Variable Being* may give us Laws to day, and repeal 'em to morrow, and revive 'em the next day, and ſo on to the end of the world.

——*Riſum teneatis, amici?*

But, ſeriouſly, Is it not a ſtrong preſumption of a *bad cauſe*, when its Patron is reduc'd to ſuch low ſhifts, ſuch wretched Sophiſtry? For is it not as clear, as the noon-day Sun, that, for a *Legiſlator* to *vary*, or *add* to, his Laws, according to the exigencies of the people under his government, is ſo far from being the effect of a *changeable*, fickle, diſpoſition, that, on the contrary, it is the reſult of a *ſteady*, unalterable, regard and concern for the *publick Good?* And ſhall the *Almighty Governor* of the Univerſe, in whom can be *no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning*, be accus'd, be blaſphem'd, as a *Changeable*, uncertain, Being; becauſe, in his good providence, he conſults the particular *circumſtances* of his Creatures, and accommodates his Laws to the *variableneſs* of their nature? Is not

not ſuch a conduct highly conſiſtent with the ſtricteſt *immutability*, and the gracious effect of a *conſtant Tenor* of Wiſdom and Goodneſs?

The laſt objection, I ſhall take notice of under the firſt Head, or Propoſition, is as follows. "In ſhort, The "Law of Nature either is, or is not, "a perfect Law; if the firſt, 'tis not "capable of additions; if the laſt, does "it not argue want of wiſdom in the "Legiſlator, in firſt enacting ſuch an "imperfect Law, and then in letting it "continue thus imperfect from Age to "Age; and at laſt thinking to make "it abſolutely perfect, by adding ſome "meerly poſitive and arbitrary pre-"cepts?" —— To which I reply, that *Poſitive* Duties have nothing to do with the perfection or imperfection of *Natural Religion*, being wholly deſign'd to aſſiſt the weakneſs, and imperfection of *Human Nature*.

Theſe are the Principal Objections againſt *Poſitive* Duties, advanc'd under the *firſt* of the abovemention'd *Propoſitions*. I Shall take notice of but *one* or *two* under the *Second*, becauſe I wou'd avoid a too frequent and tedious repetition of the ſame Reaſoning: for the truth is, Our Author's Arguments upon

upon this ſubject are but little more, than one and the ſame Objection in different Dreſſes.

He is here to ſhew, that "The ſup-"poſing Things meerly Poſitive to be "made the Ingredients of Religion, is "inconſiſtent with the Good of man-"kind, as well as the Honour of God." (*p.* 141.)

To prove which, he objects, in the firſt place, that the Obſervation of *Poſitive* Duties is a *Diſcouragement* to the Practice of *Morality*, "it being certain "(ſays our Author) that the more the "Mind is taken up with the obſerva-"tion of Things, which are not of a "moral nature, the leſs it will be able "to attend to thoſe, that are:" Which, however true in relation to Rites and Ceremonies, which have no *connexion* with the practice of *moral Virtue*, cannot affect *ſuch Poſitive* Inſtitutions of Religion, as have a plain and undeniable tendency to encourage It, by awakening and keeping up the *attention* of the mind, and diverting it from the low and mean purſuits of Vice and Immorality.

Farther; He objects to the Uſe of *Symbols* in Religion, (founded partly on this Truth, that *Senſible Things make a deeper*

deeper Impreſſion on the minds of the common People, than words) and that for two reaſons.

Firſt, Becauſe, " If we have recourſe " to words to explain the Signification " of ſuch Symbols, they are, then, but " arbitrary marks, whoſe meaning can- " not be known, but from words; and, " not being capable of expreſſing things " more fully than words wholly need- " leſs as to that purpoſe." *(p.* 172.) Which is groſsly miſtaking the Uſe of *Symbolical Repreſentations*; they being not intended to *expreſs things more fully than words*, but (what words are often leſs capable of doing) to excite and engage the *attention*, and are addreſs'd rather to the *Paſſions* and *Affections*, than the *Underſtanding*; to the *Heart*, than to the *Head*.

But, Secondly, " Senſible things ma- " king a deeper Impreſſion on the com- " mon People, is, (our Author pre- " ſumes) a juſt reaſon againſt their uſe " in Religion; becauſe the Vulgar, who " generally look no farther than Ex- " ternals, do not uſe them barely, as " they do Words, to expreſs their mean- " ing; but conceive in them I know " not what internal Holineſs; and " think ſuch ſymbolical Repreſentations

" as

" as neceſſary as the things repreſented " by them." Which is only arguing from an accidental Inconvenience; and which may be in a great meaſure remedied by proper admonitions to the people from their *Teachers*, not to reſt in the *Externals* of Religion, but to carry their Thoughts from theſe Repreſentations to the things repreſented by them.

I ſhou'd now take leave of the *ſecond Branch* of this Gentleman's *Scheme*, That *No Poſitive Precepts can be a part either of Natural or Reveal'd Religion*; having, I hope, ſufficiently evinc'd the *Propriety* of ſuch Duties, and demonſtrated their ſubſerviency to the cauſe of True Religion and Virtue. But I cannot forbear taking notice of an *occaſional Objection*, advanc'd in the very beginning of his Book; which will give the Reader a Proof of this Author's great ſkill in *Metaphyſical* Reaſoning.

A. had aſſerted, that " If Reaſon " was intended to bring us to the know- " ledge of God's Will, it muſt be ſuffi- " cient to produce the intended Effect, " and can never bring men to take " that for his Will, which he deſign'd " they, by the uſe of their reaſon,

" ſhou'd avoid as contrary to it." (*p.* 6.) Upon which *B.* puts the following ſhrew'd Queſtion. " If (ſays he) Men, " having done all in their power, all " that God requires of them, to find " out his will, ſhou'd fall into oppo- " ſite Sentiments, muſt it not be the " will of God, that it ſhou'd be ſo? " Can God will ſuch a previous Ex- " amination, and not will what he " foreknows muſt be the conſequence?" that is, If God *wills* the exerciſe of our Reaſon, muſt he not *will* all the *Errors* and *Miſtakes* it may chance to follow into?

We ſhall preſently ſee for what purpoſe this *Phantom* of a difficulty was conjur'd up, and how cunningly he has rais'd it into an Argument againſt *Poſitive* Duties. For thus he replys in the perſon of *A.* " There is, I think, " no way to avoid this Objection of " *God's willing contrarieties*, but by ſup- " poſing he requires nothing of Men, " but what is founded in the nature " of things, and the immutable Rela- " tions they bear to one another. But " this objection is unanſwerable by thoſe, " who believe the will of God may " contain many *Poſitive* Things; ſince " Men, after having taken all poſſible

" care

" care to be in the right, may yet " have oppoſite Sentiments, and be " oblig'd by the will of God to hold " and act contrarieties.

But is he ſure this Objection is unanſwerable by the Advocates for *Poſitive* Duties? Suppoſe we ſhou'd alledge (what has been demonſtrated a thouſand times) that the *Preſcience* of the *ſupream Being* does by no means influence the thoughts or actions of *Free Agents*; it being utterly inconſiſtent with the notion of Human *Liberty* to ſuppoſe it does: conſequently, that no *diverſity* of ſentiments among Men, be the ſubject of their Enquiry what it will, can be ſaid to be the will of God, only becauſe he muſt foreſee the reſult of their Enquiries; What opinion can we entertain of this Author's Knowledge in *Metaphyſicks?*

But the misfortune is, This Argument will equally prove, that God's Will cannot contain any thing of a *Moral* nature: it being evident, in fact, that Men, after having taken all poſſible care in their enquiries concerning *moral* duties, may yet have *oppoſite* Sentiments about them. The *Spartans*, in ſome caſes, encouraged the commiſſion of *Theft* in their Youth, tho' a plain

violation of that *moral* Law, which forbids the Invaſion of another's Property. And it is notorious that the *Romans*, tho' the moſt polite and civiliz'd Nation, made no ſcruple, not only of *preventing* the birth of Infants by indirect means, but even of * *expoſing* them moſt unnaturaly, when born. Nay, did not one whole Sect of *Philoſophers* (the *Stoicks)* maintain the *Lawfulneſs* of *ſelf-murder*, expreſsly condemn'd by others †? And I can ſee no reaſon to believe, that the *Spartans*, or *Romans*, had taken leſs care to be in the right, than other People. If therefore a *diverſity* of opinions among Men is no argument why God's Will ſhou'd not contain things of a *moral* nature, why is it urg'd as a reaſon againſt its containing thoſe of a *poſitive* nature?

* *When* Soſtrata, *in* Terence, *apologizes to her husband* Chremes *for having ſav'd the Life of her Daughter, whom He had commanded her to expoſe, does it look as if he had the leaſt apprehenſion that it wou'd have been an* Immoral *Act, when he charges her* diſobedience *to his cruel commands as a* Crime, *in theſe words — ?*

——— certo ſcio
Te inſcientem atque imprudentem dicere ac facere omnia.
Tot *peccata* in hâc Re oſtendis: nam jam primum, ſi meum
Imperium exſequi voluiſſes, *interemptam* oportuit.

† *See* Cicero's *Philoſophical Writings.*

Thus

Thus I have endeavour'd to ſhew the true *Nature* and *Obligation* of *Poſitive Duties*, with their *Propriety*, and Subſerviency to the cauſe of *Religion* and *Virtue*; and to vindicate them from the particular *Objections* of the *Author* now before us. The Inconſiſtency of ſuppoſing *ſuch* Duties to be a *Part* of *Religion*, either *Natural* or *Reveal'd*, with this Gentleman's *Scheme*, is too evident not to diſcover to us the true reaſon of his rejecting them. And, therefore, we are not to wonder, that he every where treats *Poſitive Inſtitutions* as meer *Arbitrary Commands*, without any Foundation in *Reaſon*, or the *Nature of Things*. But, methinks, it is a little ſtrange, that ſo great a Maſter of Reaſon, at the ſame time that he wou'd perſuade us, that *Poſitive* Duties are inconſiſtent both with the *Honour* of *God*, and the *Good* of *Mankind*, ſhou'd yet allow them to be the *Means* of *Religion*, and upon that very account contend, that the Appointment of them ſhou'd be left to *Human Diſcretion*.

To put the controverſy upon a ſhort iſſue; it is incumbent upon him to prove theſe *two points*.

Firſt, That the *Poſitive Inſtitutions* of *Reveal'd Religion*, particularly Thoſe of the

the *Chriſtian*, have no *connexion* with the Practice of *Moral Virtue*. And here he will be call'd upon to ſhew the *Impropriety* of the Chriſtian *Sacraments*. He muſt prove, that the *ſtated*, ſolemn, *Commemoration* of the great *Preacher of Righteouſneſs*, in the *Euchariſt*, can have no influence upon the Heart and Affections, no tendency to promote that *Virtue*, which He came to teach; and that the *Initiation*, by *Baptiſm*, into the *Religion* of *Jeſus* is an *improper* Method of *Profeſſing* our ſelves *his Diſciples*.

In the next place, he muſt ſhew, upon what Principles of Reaſon and Nature *God* Almighty is reſtrain'd from interpoſing in thoſe things, which, excluſive of a divine command, are the proper Objects of *Human Direction*: why, allowing *Poſitive Inſtitutions* to be the *Means* of *Religion*, without which *Moral* Duties (to uſe our Author's own words) *can't many times be perform'd* (p. 431.) it ſhou'd be *fit*, that *Men* ſhou'd appoint them, but *unfit* that *God* ſhou'd.

If he can demonſtrate theſe two points, I ſhall readily come into his Sentiments, and reject all ſuch *Rites*, as *Superſtitious*, and the crafty Impoſi-

tion

tion of deſigning Men. But, if he fails in the attempt, it will be eaſy to judge what cenſure every ſober and impartial Reader muſt paſs upon an *Author*, Who endeavours to take off the *Reſtraints* of *Religion*, and conſequently to weaken the intereſts of *Moral Virtue* among Men.

F I N I S.

Errata in the firſt Part, *Page* 2.
l. 15, for reſented read repreſented.

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In ANSWER

To a late Book, Entitled,

Christianity as Old as the Creation, &c.

PART. III.

In which the Author's *Occasional Objections* to the *Credit* and *Authority* of *Divine Revelation* are consider'd.

By THOMAS BROUGHTON, A. M.
Reader at the Temple-Church.

LONDON:

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OUR Author's *New* Method (conſider'd in my laſt) of determining what *can*, or *cannot*, be the *Reveal'd* Will of God, not from *Fact*, but meer *Hypotheſis*, gave us a ſufficient proof of the *real* intent and deſign of his *Scheme*. We pretend to a *divine Revelation:* He does not deny It. We ſay, that this Revelation contains ſome Precepts of a *Poſitive* Nature: This he will not allow: Why? Becauſe it is inconſiſtent with a certain *Hypotheſis* of his own invention. It is in vain to plead, that Theſe Precepts are plainly and expreſsly laid down; that if he will give himſelf the trouble of looking into This Revelation, he muſt ſee that They are ſo. The Anſwer is Short: *Divine Revelation* is in-

capable of ſuch Precepts; and, therefore, we may chooſe which *ſide* of this *dilemma* we think fit, either to part with our *Poſitive* Duties, or give up our *Revelation.* Here the true Deſign of the Author unfolds itſelf: He is, in reality, little concern'd, whether *Chriſtianity* enjoins any Duties of a *Poſitive* Nature, or no; ſince, either way, the Cauſe of *Deiſm* is effectually ſerv'd. If it does not, it is *nothing more* than *Natural Religion*; If it does, it cannot poſſibly be *Divine Revelation.*

But, beſides the natural tendency of his *Scheme* to overthrow *Reveal'd* Religion, he has advanc'd ſeveral *Occaſional Objections* to its *Credit* and *Authority*; the moſt material of which I come, in the laſt place, to conſider. And,

Firſt, He objects to the Nature of its *Evidence*; which can be but That of *Probability.* "If it be but probable "(ſays he) that God made any External "Revelation at all, it can be but pro-"bable, tho' perhaps not in the ſame "degree of Probability, that he made "this, or that Revelation." *(p.* 184.) Where he evidently inſinuates, that the *Truth* of *Revelation in general*, however the *degrees* of *Probability* may differ, muſt neceſſarily, from the nature of its

its *Evidence*, be very *precarious* and *uncertain*. To take off the force of which Objection, it will be proper to enquire a little into the true Nature of *Probability*, and its efficacy towards raiſing *conviction* in the Mind.

It is agreed on all hands, that *Probability* is a kind of *Evidence inferior* to that of *Demonſtration*. But then I aſſert, that the *Difference*, or *Interval*, between *Demonſtration*, and the *higheſt degree* of *Probability*, is ſo exceedingly *ſmall*, that the *Conviction* ariſing from *both* is, to all intents and purpoſes, *equally ſtrong*. As, in *Computation*, a *ſmall Fraction* may be neglected without affecting the reſult or *ſum Total*; ſo, tho' *Probability*, in its *higheſt degree*, falls a little ſhort of *Demonſtration*, yet is the defect ſo inconſiderable, that it *equally* commands the *Aſſent* of the Mind with *Demonſtration* itſelf. Again, As, in *Painting*, it is difficult for the ſkilfulleſt Eye to diſtinguiſh the exact *boundaries* of *Light* and *Shade*, or of two *colours* inſenſibly diluting and mixing with each other; ſo is it difficult for the ſtrongeſt Imagination exactly to diſcern where *Probability ends*, and *Demonſtration begins*. To prove this experimentally, ſelect any two *Propoſitions*,

the one *highly probable*, the other capable of *demonſtration:* for inſtance, theſe two; *There is ſuch an Iſland as Jamaica*; and *The three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones.* For the Truth of the latter you have *Euclid*'s *Demonſtration*; for that of the former only the concurrent *teſtimony* of numbers, who have ſeen the Iſland. To know, whether your *conviction* of the Truth of Both be equal, examine your mind, whether it entertains any *doubt* or ſcruple concerning either. If it does not; you may be ſure, that the *Evidence* for both, tho' not *mathematically equal*, is yet ſufficient to produce an *equal Aſſent:* And you may as wiſely, and ſecurely, make a voyage to *Jamaica*, upon the *probable Evidence*, that there is ſuch an *Iſland*, as proceed in any *Mathematical* Enquiries upon the ſtrength of *Euclid*'s *Demonſtrations.*

It being true, then, that *Probability* may riſe to ſo *high* a degree, as to be of *equal* force towards commanding the *Aſſent* of the mind with *Demonſtration* itſelf; If External *Revelation* be attended with this *high* degree of *Evidence*, it is no objection to it, that it *can be but probable.* Where there is *ſufficient Evidence* of the Truth of any Thing,

to

to require more is highly abſurd and unreaſonable.

The Queſtion, then, will be, whether External *Revelation* be capable of this high degree of *Probability* or not. If you will believe our Author, it cannot; and for this reaſon, becauſe, however *probable* Revelation may appear, when it is firſt publiſh'd to the World, the Evidence of its Truth muſt continually decreaſe; "the very nature of "Probability (it ſeems) being ſuch, that, "were it only left to Time itſelf, even "That wou'd wear it quite out; at leaſt, "if it be true, what Mathematicians "pretend to demonſtrate, *viz.* that the "Probability of Facts, depending on "Human Teſtimony, muſt gradually "leſſen, in proportion to the diſtance "of Time, when they were done." And he adds, "We have a reverend "Divine *, who has publiſh'd, as he "thinks, a demonſtration of this with "relation to Facts recorded in Scrip-"ture, and has gone ſo far, as to fix "the preciſe time, when All probabi-"lity of the Truth of the Hiſtory of "Chriſt will be entirely ſpent and ex-"hauſted." *(p.* 185.) If this be true, The Probability of the *Goſpel Hiſtory*

* *Craig*'s Principia Mathem. Theologiæ Chriſt.

has

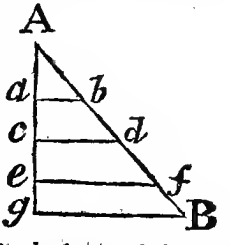
has been conſtantly decreaſing ever ſince its firſt promulgation; and conſequently We, of this *preſent* Age, have much *leſs* reaſon to believe in *Chriſt*, than They had, who lived *five hundred*, or a *thouſand*, years ago.

To which I reply, That, When we ſpeak of *Facts*, depending on *Human Teſtimony*, we ought to diſtinguiſh between the *memory* of *Facts*, convey'd by *Oral Tradition* from one perſon to another, and That deliver'd down in *Hiſtorical Records*. The Injury, which theſe diſtinct kinds of *Teſtimony* receive from Length of *Time* is by no means *equal*. The former may be greatly impair'd, perhaps quite worn out, by it: but this is not the caſe of the latter. It is true, The ſucceſſive *Copies* of a *Written Teſtimony* may have been gradually *corrupted*; but how does this *leſſen* the *Probability* of the *Facts* recorded in it? It may render the knowledge of thoſe Facts, with all their Circumſtances, more *difficult* to come at: but, where a Paſſage in an Author, relating a *matter of Fact*, is clear and intelligible, without any ſuſpicion of a *falſe reading*, Why is not the *Probability* of its Truth the *ſame now*, that it was *five hundred*, or a *thouſand* Years ago? Why

Why, *Mathematicians* have demonſtrated the contrary from the Nature of *Probability*; particularly "A Reverend Divine * has fix'd the preciſe "Time, when all probability of the "Truth of the Hiſtory of Chriſt will "be entirely ſpent, and exhauſted." But, beſides that the *Increaſe* and *Decreaſe* of *Probability*, depending on ſuch a variety of circumſtances, and thoſe perpetually changing, ſeems to me incapable of being reduc'd to *Mathematical Calculation*, to Mr. *Craig*'s *pretended Demonſtration* in particular I ob-

* *Mr.* Craig, *if I remember right (not having the Treatiſe by me) builds his demonſtration on the following* Lemma.

Velocitates Suſpicionis creſcunt in duplicatâ ratione Temporum. *Which he endeavours to prove from a* Triangle; *in which A a, a c, c e, e g, are the ſeveral* Intervals *of* Time; *a b, c d, e f, g B, the* velocities *of the* Suſpicion *at each* Interval; *conſequently The* Velocity *of the* Suſpicion *at the* Interval *of* Time *a will be to that at c as the* Square *of A a to the* Square *of A c. and ſo of the reſt.*



But the misfortune is, that by the ſame method we can demonſtrate the very reverſe. For ſubſtitute the term Probabilitatis *in the room of* Suſpicionis, *and the Propoſition will be* Velocitates Probabilitatis creſcunt in ratione duplicatâ Temporum. *But who does not ſee, that this Propoſition is quite the reverſe of the other, and yet the pretended Demonſtration equally applicable to it?*

ject,

ject, that if the *Probability* of the *Hiſtory* of *Chriſt* continually decreaſes, it muſt have done ſo from the beginning; and conſequently the number of *Proſelytes* to *Chriſtianity*, after the *firſt Propagators* of it were dead, muſt have proportionably decreas'd: Whereas the contrary is true. Its *votaries* continu'd to increaſe, till the whole *Roman* Empire became *Chriſtian*. So that, in the caſe of the *Goſpel Hiſtory*, the *Probability* of it ſhou'd ſeem to have *encreas'd*; every new Acceſſion of *Proſelytes* being an *additional* Proof and Confirmation of its Truth. And, therefore, I ſhou'd chuſe to illuſtrate the ſubject by the *Fall* of a *Heavy Body*, whoſe *Velocity encreaſes* in proportion to the *Time* of its *Deſcent*. But, ſuppoſing the *Probability* of Chriſt's Hiſtory to *decreaſe*, ſtill it can never be *entirely ſpent and exhauſted*, till the *Records* of it are quite *unintelligible*, or quite *loſt*. The former may happen in an Age of *Univerſal Ignorance*: but, then, it will not be owing to the Nature of *Probability*. The latter, conſidering the prodigious number of *Copies*, can ſcarce ever happen. The burning of a thouſand *Alexandrian Libraries* wou'd not avail: nothing leſs can effect it, than the *General Conflagration*.

But,

But, farther to weaken the Authority of *External Revelation*, it is alledg'd by this Author, that we cannot be certain we are not *impos'd* upon: for he asks, "Ought we not to be certain, "that the first Propagators of it cou'd "not be impos'd on themselves, or "wou'd not impose on others; or, in "other words were infallible and im-"peccable?" (*p.* 243.) —— The reason why, he hints, they might be impos'd on themselves, is, because "numbers "have taken their own *reveries* for di-"vine Inspirations" —— And the reason why they might impose on others is taken from some Instances in Scripture itself of "Inspir'd persons as much "govern'd by their passions as other "men" —— Here he instances in *Abraham*'s incestuous marriage with his Sister; *David*'s inhuman Treatment of *Uriah*; *Solomon*'s Idolatry, *&c.* These Instances, he says, plainly Shew, that "Inspir'd Persons, whether Prophets, "or Apostles, are subject to the same "passions, even to dissembling, and ly-"ing, as other men." —— Nay farther, Even, "Supposing Apostles, and Pro-"phets impeccable, as well as infalli-"ble, yet what certainty can People "have, that those things, which were

" taught by them, have been faithfully " convey'd down, for many generations " together, by Men, who were far from " being infallible, or impeccable?" —— Farther ſtill, " Admitting Tradition has " been a faithful Conveyancer, yet how " can the common people be certain " the Scripture has been faithfully tran- " ſlated?" —— Nor is this all; for, " granting even that (that the Scrip- " ture has been faithfully tranſlated) " yet, ſince moſt Texts have vaſtly va- " ried, and ſometimes contrary, inter- " pretations, how can they be confi- " dent, they do not miſtake their mean- ing?"

You ſee he has thrown together, in a ſort of *climax*, a ſeries of Objections to the *credit* of *divine Revelation*. I am ſenſible he will plead, that this is done with a view, not of deſtroying all Authority of *Reveal'd Religion*, but of inferring more ſtrongly the uſe of Reaſon in judging even of *Revelation* itſelf. But the evident deſign of his Book will not ſuffer us to doubt of his particular view in the Objections now before us. I ſhall, therefore, diſtinctly review them, and conſider how far they affect the *credit* and *Authority* of *External Revelation*.

As

As to his firſt Queſtion, " Ought we " not to be certain, that the firſt Pro- " pagators of it cou'd not be impos'd " on themſelves, or wou'd not impoſe " on others?" —— I anſwer, If we can be *morally certain* (and farther than this is neither poſſible, nor neceſſary) that the firſt Propagators of any Religion cou'd not be impos'd on themſelves, nor wou'd impoſe on others, in *that particular Tranſaction*, there is no neceſſity to ſuppoſe them *abſolutely Infallible*, or that they cou'd not be impos'd on in *any other* matter. If *External Revelation* depends on an *Hiſtorical Relation of Facts and Doctrines*; the only requiſite Qualifications are *Memory* and *Fidelity*. It muſt be obſerv'd, that the preſent Queſtion has nothing to do with the *ſtyle* and *manner* of *Hiſtorical Writing*, but wholly regards the *Credit* and *Authority* of the *Writer*. In this view, It is no more neceſſary, that an *Hiſtorian* (and as ſuch they muſt be conſider'd) ſhou'd be Abſolutely *Infallible*, than that He ſhou'd be *Omnipotent*. If there be the *higheſt Probability*, that he has given a *faithful* and impartial Account of what He himſelf was a *living Witneſs*, I ſhou'd look no farther into his Qualifications, nor

expect in him the Talents of a conſummate *Stateſman*, *General*, or *Mathematician* —— We ſuppoſe *Revelation* founded upon *Fact*; and therefore, tho' there were ten thouſand Inſtances of *Enthuſiaſm*, where People have taken their own *Reveries* for *divine Inſpiration*, this is no Objection to a *Revelation thus* founded.

And, as particular Inſtances of *Enthuſiaſm* are no Arguments why the firſt Propagators of External Revelation might be *impos'd upon themſelves*; ſo neither is it any preſumption they might deſign to *impoſe on others*, that there are many inſtances, even in Scripture itſelf, "of Impoſ'd Perſons as much govern'd by their paſſions as other Men." The true Queſtion is, What *intereſt* cou'd they have in impoſing upon the world? What ſuſpicion is there of *Fraud?* If it can be prov'd, that they cou'd have *worldly views* to ſerve; If there is no room to ſuſpect a *Cheat*; to what purpoſe this Author's Inſtances? Becauſe *Abraham* married his Siſter, *David* murther'd *Uriah*, and *Solomon* apoſtatiz'd from the true God; therefore *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, may not have given a *faithful Account* of the Life and Actions of a Perſon, with whom

whom they were *cotemporaries*, and perpetually converſant. A pretty conſequence truly! — Beſides, there is no reaſon for ſuppoſing *Abraham*, *David*, and *Solomon*, to have been *inſpir'd* in the Senſe, in which we are aſſur'd the *Apoſtles* were: who, after our Saviour's *Aſcenſion*, receiv'd the *Holy Ghoſt* in a viſible manner, in order to bring to their *remembrance* what they had heard from our Lord's own mouth, and to *guide* them into all *Truth*; an advantage, which no Writers of *prophane Hiſtory* ever enjoy'd. With theſe Qualifications of *Juſt* and *Impartial Hiſtorians*, if They cannot find credit with our Author, I expect he will give up the moſt *authentick* Writers of *Antiquity*, and believe as little in *Livy*, as he does in *Luke*.

To the next queſtion, "What cer-
"tainty can People have, that thoſe
"things, which were taught by them,
"have been faithfully convey'd down
"for many Generations together by
"Men, who were far from being infal-
"lible, or impeccable?" — if he means, How can we be ſure we have the *very Doctrines* of the *Firſt Preachers* deliver'd down to us? — I anſwer, We may have all the Evidence of it, which the

the Nature of the Thing is capable of, the higheſt degree of *Probability*; and till it is prov'd, or render'd matter of Suſpicion, that We have not, it wou'd be abſurd to doubt of it. As to meer *Human Errors*, ſuch as *Inaccuracies* and *miſtakes* in the *tranſcribing*, or rendering out of one *Language* into another and the like, I deny not but They may happen thro' *Length* of *Time*, and the many *Generations*, thro' which a *Written Revelation* is to paſs; but it does not follow, that the *Doctrine* of the Revelation will be thereby *ſpoil'd*, or become *different* from what it *originally* was.—— The general Senſe of an Author is not to be collected from *ſingle paſſages* of his works, but from a compariſon of the ſeveral *parts* with each other. And, tho' ſome Expreſſions may be accidentally obſcur'd, they may receive Light and Explication from others, which have not ſuffer'd the like Injury. And I doubt not, but the *main Doctrines*, and moſt *important Points*, of the *Chriſtian Revelation* may be as fully prov'd from the moſt *corrupt*, as the moſt *correct* Copies of the *New Teſtament*. Beſides I will venture to ſuggeſt one Argument to the *Chriſtian Reader*, which I do not expect

this

this Author will allow me; which is, that, ſuppoſing a *divine Revelation* actually given to the world, it is agreeable to our Notions of the *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* of God to believe he will ſo far *providentially* interpoſe, in guarding it down to poſterity, as not to ſuffer any *Errors* of conſequence, any *Corruption*, which may deſtroy the *deſign* of the Revelation, to creep into it.

To The two laſt Queſtions, *viz.* "How can the Common People be "certain the Scripture has been faith-"fully tranſlated?" —— And "How can "they be confident they do not mi-"ſtake its meaning?" —— I anſwer, They muſt for theſe things depend on the *Skill* and *Honeſty* of others; nor do I ſee any great Inconvenience in this, more than attends them in the moſt important concerns of Human Life. In matters of *Law* they truſt to the Able *Counſellor*, in *ſickneſs*, to the Learned *Phyſician*: and it wou'd be thought ſurely an unreaſonable Objection to the Sciences of *Law* and *Phyſick*, to ſay "How can the common Peo-"ple be ſure that the *Lawyer* will not "endanger their *Property* inſtead of ſe-"curing it, or the *Phyſician* adminiſter "*poiſon* inſtead of *phyſick*?" —— Now

it

it is as impoſſible, that the Common People ſhou'd, of themſelves, comprehend the meaning of the *Scripture* in its *original Languages*, as it is, that every Man ſhou'd be a *Lawyer*, or a *Phyſician*; And yet, when It is render'd into a Language they *do underſtand*, and when they ſee numbers of unqueſtion'd *Honeſty* and Integrity, of great *Learning* and Ability, building their *Faith* upon it, and governing their *Actions* by its Precepts, have they not the greateſt *moral certainty*, that *the Scripture has been faithfully tranſlated?* and what can poſſibly induce them to ſuſpect the contrary? —— As to *miſtaking its Senſe*, No Man is accountable to God for more than He *does*, or *may*, underſtand: and ſurely the poſſibility of *not underſtanding* a Revelation is no objection to its *Authority*, when it *is underſtood*.

In the next place, Our Author ſeems to think it derogates from the *Perfection* and *Uſe* of *Revelation*, that its *Precepts* are not ſo *particular*, and *circumſtantial*, as Thoſe of *Natural Religion*, which extends its Rules to every poſſible circumſtance of Human Life. This, he thinks, gives the *Religion* of *Nature* a great advantage over That of Revelation. For, " Conſidering (ſays " he)

" he) the variety of circumſtances Men " are under, and Thoſe continually " changing, as well as unforeſeen, it " is impoſſible to have Rules laid down " by any external Revelation for ev'ry " Particular Caſe; and therefore there " muſt be ſome *Standing Rule*, diſco- " verable by the Light of Nature, to " direct us in all ſuch Caſes." —— So that, according to his own poſition, All particular Caſes, even under meer *Natural Religion*, muſt be adjuſted, and determin'd, by ſome General, *Standing*, Rule. —— How, then, does this prove the Superiority of the *Religion* of *Nature*, in the preſent caſe, over That of *Revelation?* Why may not the latter contain ſuch general, *ſtanding*, *Rules* of *Morality*, as may be a ſufficient direction in all *particular Caſes?* For inſtance, Many caſes may be put, in which the Behaviour of one Man towards another is not determin'd by any Poſitive Laws of Society. Aſk a *Deiſt*, how we are to be govern'd in ſuch caſes, He will refer you to that *ſtanding Law* of Nature, *Do as you wou'd be done unto.* But *Chriſtians* know, that *External Revelation* has laid down this very *Rule.* And, as, in *Mathematical* Reaſoning, Every *Corollary*

is virtually included in the *Theorem* it is deduc'd from, ſo when ſuch a *General Rule* of *Action*, as This, is propos'd by *Revelation*, every *particular application* of it is as much a Precept of *Reveal'd* Religion, as of *Natural*.

Our Author's *Objections*, hitherto, lie againſt *Revelation in general*. We come now to thoſe, in which CHRISTIANITY conſider'd as a *Particular Revelation*, is *immediately* concern'd.

And Theſe are chiefly ſuch as affect the *Circumſtances* of this *Revelation*, or the *Manner* of its *Diſpenſation* to mankind: among which I ſhall ſelect the *two* following, as affording great Cauſe of Triumph to this Author.

The *Firſt* is, That the *Goſpel Revelation* is a *Partial Inſtitution*;

The *Second*, That it *wants Effect*.

The Former of theſe Objections conſiſts of *Two parts*; *Chriſtianity* being repreſented as a *Partial Inſtitution*, Firſt, becauſe it was *not* given to mankind *from the beginning*; Secondly, becauſe, now that it is given, it is *not Univerſal*.

And

And, firſt, The *Goſpel Revelation* (I mean the *Goſpel* of *Chriſtians*, not this Author's, which every body knows ſtands clear of this objection) The *Goſpel Revelation*, I ſay, is repreſented as a *Partial Inſtitution*, becauſe it was *not* given to mankind *from the beginning* —— This Objection, in our Author's words, ſtands thus. "If the De- "ſign of God in communicating any "thing of himſelf to Mankind was "their Happineſs, wou'd not that de- "ſign have oblig'd him, who at all "times alike deſires their Happineſs, "to have at all times alike communi- "cated it to them? If God always "acts for the good of his Creatures, "what reaſon can be aſſign'd, why he "ſhou'd not *from the beginning* have "diſcover'd ſuch things, as make for "their good, but defer the doing it "to the time of *Tiberius*; ſince the "ſooner this was done, the greater "wou'd his goodneſs appear? Nay, is "it conſiſtent with infinite Benevolence "to hide that for many ages, which "he knew was as uſeful at firſt to pre- "vent, as afterwards it wou'd be to "put a ſtop to any thing he diſliked? "——If God acts upon rational mo- "tives, muſt not the ſame motives,

" that oblige him to diſcover any thing " that's for the good of mankind, have " oblig'd him to diſcover every thing, " that is ſo?" *(p.* 393.)

I have, in part, anſwer'd this Objection already *, by obſerving, that a *divine Revelation* is an *Act* of *Mercy*, not of *Juſtice*; conſequently, that there may be wiſe *reaſons*, which we are unacquainted with, why God *defer'd* doing, what he was not *oblig'd* to do at all, to a diſtant period of Time. —— The Objection, as it is here ſtated, is built upon this preſumption, that the *Chriſtian Revelation* was as *fit* to have been *communicated* from the *beginning*, as at *the time*, in which it is ſaid to have *actually* appear'd; and for this reaſon, becauſe it was *as uſeful at firſt to prevent, as afterwards it cou'd be to put a ſtop to any thing, which God diſliked.*

The *Negative* of this Propoſition *(viz.* the *Impropriety* of God's communicating the *Chriſtian Revelation ſooner)* is, perhaps, incapable of being clearly prov'd from a bare conſideration of the *nature* of the *Revelation itſelf:* but ſurely it is incumbent on this Author, if he expects the Objection to have any

* Vid. *Part.* 1. *p.* 30.

weight

weight with the *Believers* of Revelation, to demonſtrate the *Affirmative.*—— To a *Chriſtian* it is ſufficient to prove that the *Goſpel Revelation* was actually *not* given till a *certain* period of *Time*, to ſatisfy him that *That* was the *propereſt* Time.——A *Deiſt*, perhaps, will not allow this reaſon: but then he muſt *demonſtrate*, that *Human Nature* was, *at all times*, *equally prepar'd* to *receive this Revelation*, and that the *ſucceſs* of the *Goſpel* wou'd have been *the ſame*, in whatever Age of the world it had appear'd. If he cannot ſhew this, the very reverſe, for ought he knows, may be the Truth of the Caſe. Mankind might not, at *all times*, have been *equally diſpos'd* for the *reception* of a *divine Revelation*; and the propagation of a new Religion might poſſibly not have met with *equal ſucceſs* in any *other Age* of the World——This is certain, that *Auguſtus*, the immediate Predeceſſor of *Tiberius*, (in whoſe reign *Chriſt* was born,) had eſtabliſh'd an *univerſal Peace* over the whole *Roman Empire*; which, no doubt, greatly contributed to the *quicker* and more *ſucceſsful* Propagation of the *Goſpel*; a circumſtance, which diſcovers to us ſomething of the *Propriety* of this *particular period* of Time beyond

yond any other for accompliſhing this gracious deſign of Providence. Nor can we well doubt, that the *wiſdom* of God was determin'd, in its choice of *this period*, by ſomething in the fluctuating ſtate and condition of *Human Nature itſelf* (which he cou'd not but foreſee) when we view That *regular OEconomy* of *Providence*, ſo plainly to be trac'd in the *Hiſtory* of the *Bible*, from the *Fall* of *Man* to the Appearance of the *Promis'd Seed*; and conſider the *gradual Openings* of this *gracious* deſign in a *Succeſſion* of *Prophecies*, all pointing to *one perſon* and *one period of time*, and all remarkably accompliſh'd in *both*. And therefore the Juncture of *Chriſt*'s appearance in the fleſh is very *properly*, as well as *emphatically*, ſtyl'd in Scripture *The Fullneſs of Time*.

But *Chriſtianity* is not only accus'd of *Partiality*, becauſe it was not given to mankind *from* the beginning; but another quarrel againſt it is, that, now it is given, it is not *Univerſal*; and the gracious Author of it is charg'd with *Cruelty* in not beſtowing it on *all* his creatures *equally*. For "Can a Being "be denominated merciful and good "(this Gentleman aſks) Who is ſo on-"ly to a Few, but cruel and unmerci-"ful

" ful to the reſt? And certainly All the " Arguments urg'd from the neceſſities " of mankind, and the abundant good- " neſs of God, will equally prove, that " this Revelation, did it teach a New " Religion, ſhou'd be *Univerſal*, as that it " ſhou'd be at all." *(p.* 401.) —— But this Queſtion is eaſily anſwer'd by another. What *right* has *Human Nature* to a *Revelation* at all? What demand have we upon God's *Juſtice* for this *Additional Light*, after having *originally* receiv'd from him ſuch a meaſure of *Reaſon*, as wou'd have enabled us, had it been duly follow'd, to diſcover, and obey, his *Will?* The *Abuſe* of our *Reaſon* ſure is no *Plea* for ſuch a *Favour*. And, therefore, if God thinks proper to grant it to one part of his Creatures, and not the other; he beſtows on *theſe*, indeed, more than they *deſerve*, but does no *Injury* thereby to the other.

But we are aſk'd, " What Human " Legiſlator, if he found any defect in " his Laws, and thought it for the good " of his Subjects to add new Laws, " wou'd not promulgate them to all " his People? Or what Parent wou'd " act after ſo partial a manner, as *we* " ſuppoſe the common Parent of man- " kind has done?" —— But are theſe Caſes

Caſes *parallel?* Can any Argument be fairly drawn from the nature of *civil Government*, or the direction of a *private family*, to the great concerns of *Providence* in the wonderful œconomy and Government of the *Univerſe?*

But, what, tho' *Revelation* be not *univerſal*, is this any objection to the Uſe and Advantage of it, where it is beſtow'd? —— Shall we reject the *favour* of God, becauſe others are deſtitute of them? Shall we refuſe to be *Chriſtians*, becauſe the *Chineſe* are not? In ſhort, the whole Objection to Revelation on account of its *Partiality* is highly abſurd and unreaſonable: And He, who aſks, Why Revelation was not given *ſooner*, or why not to *all*; may with equal reaſon demand, why God did not *create* the *Earth ſooner?* why, now it is created, *ſome* parts of it are bleſſed with *greater fertility* than *others?* Why Men *differ* in *degrees* and *ſtrength* of *Reaſon?* or why They were not All created *Angels?*

But, ſecondly, tho' the conduct of God may ſtand acquitted of *Cruelty* and *Injuſtice* in not giving this Revelation *ſooner*, and, when given, not to *all* his creatures alike; How ſhall we juſtify his providence in not better ſe-

ſecuring

ſecuring the *good Effects* of it in the world, in not rendering it *effectual* to the *Reformation* of mankind, the very purpoſe for which we ſuppoſe it given? —— In this Objection our Author greatly triumphs; the ſubſtance of which I have connected, and thrown together, as follows. —— " If Revelation was ab-
" ſolutely neceſſary to recover mankind
" out of their univerſally degenerate
" and corrupted ſtate, and replace them
" in a ſtate ſuitable to the original dig-
" nity and excellency of their nature
" —— muſt not Revelation have had
" its intended effect, and made Chri-
" ſtians —— much more perfect, and
" excellent, than men cou'd poſſibly be
" in times of unavoidable corruption?"
(p. 402.) —— And yet

" What impartial Man, who has
" compar'd the former and preſent con-
" dition of mankind, can think the
" world much mended, ſince the times
" of *Tiberius*, or, tho' ever ſo well
" vers'd in Church Hiſtory, can, from
" the conduct of Chriſtians, find that
" they are arriv'd to any higher ſtate
" of perfection, than the reſt of man-
" kind?" *(p.* 404.) — For,

" Alas! we find, that what, in moſt
" places, paſſes for the Chriſtian Reli-

" ligion —— has transform'd this ſocial, " and benign, creature *(Man)* into one " fierce and cruel, and made him act " with ſuch rage and fury againſt thoſe, " who never did or deſign'd him any " Injury, as cou'd not have enter'd into " the Heart of man to conceive —— " even in a ſtate of Degeneracy and " Corruption." *(p.* 406.) —— And it is certain that

" The Corruptions of the Goſpel " have been more fatal to the Happineſs " of mankind, than all the Superſtitions " of the *Pagan* World." *(p.* 407.) —— To which I anſwer,

Firſt, That this Objection, if there is any thing in it, lies, not againſt *Revelation*, but *Human Nature:* The *Goſpel* may have a *Natural Efficacy* to *reform* Mankind, and yet it may be in the power of *Free-Agents* to defeat its Influence. But it is unjuſt to charge this *want of Effect* on the *Goſpel* itſelf. —— A *ſick Man* may refuſe the *ſalutary Aſſiſtance* of the *Phyſician*; but will you, therefore, ſay The *Preſcription* wou'd not have been *effectual*, had the *Patient* comply'd with it? —— A *Barren ſoil* is no proof, that the enlivening *Heat* of the *Sun*, and refreſhing *ſhowers* of *Rain*, have not a *Natural*

tural efficacy to produce the *Fruits* of the Earth.——But, Secondly,

This Objection falls ſhort of the Author's Aim. It is founded in the Corruptions of the Goſpel, and lies properly, not againſt the *Chriſtian Religion* itſelf, but ſomething which, *in moſt places, paſſes for Chriſtianity.*——But Why, then, is it produc'd as an Objection againſt the Chriſtian Revelation? Why muſt the *True Religion* be revil'd on account of this *Impoſtor* in its *borrow'd* Garb and Semblance? We readily grant, that Infinite *Miſchiefs* may ariſe from *miſtaken* notions of the *Goſpel* Scheme. But what then? Is the *Goſpel* in fault, or thoſe, who *miſtake* its nature? If the bittereſt *rage* has ſprung from, and the moſt ſhocking *cruelties* been acted, on pretence of, *Religion*, is *Chriſtianity* to blame, which expreſsly commands us to *live peaceably with all men*, and breaths nothing but *Brotherly Love*, and *Univerſal Charity?*——*Impieties* of all kinds may have been the *Accidental*, but they were not the *Neceſſary*, Conſequences of ſpreading the *Chriſtian Religion* in the world.

But there is, really, no Foundation of *Truth* in this Objection. And I will venture to appeal, with the late

Dr. *Clarke*, * to any impartial Perſon, in the leaſt acquainted with the *Hiſtory* of Mankind, *Whether the Teſtimony of Chriſt —— concerning the Immortality of the Soul, and the rewards and puniſhments of a future State, have not had (notwithſtanding all the corruptions of Chriſtianity) viſibly, in experience and effect, a greater and more powerful Influence upon the Lives and Actions of men, than the reaſoning of all the Philoſophers, that ever were in the world —— Whether in Chriſtian Countries (at leaſt where Chriſtianity is profeſs'd in any tolerable degree of Purity) the generality, even of the meaner and moſt vulgar and ignorant people, have not truer and worthier notions of God, more juſt and right apprehenſions concerning his Attributes and Perfections, a deeper Senſe of the difference of Good and Evil, a greater regard to moral Obligations, and to the plain and moſt neceſſary duties of Life, and a more firm and univerſal expectation of a future ſtate, of rewards and puniſhments; than, in any Heathen Country, any conſiderable number of men were ever found to have.*

Right Principles have a natural *Efficacy* to produce *Right Action*; and tho' I do not deny, but Men may ſometimes

* *Evidences of Nat. and Rev. Rel.* p. 311.

act

act *right* upon *wrong Principles*, yet as theſe can never have a natural tendency to regulate the Actions of Mankind, this can but be *accidental*. It is as abſurd in *Theory*, as it is falſe in *Fact*, to ſuppoſe, that *wrong* Apprehenſions of *God* and his *Attributes*, with but a *faint* and doubtful *Expectation* of a *future State* of Rewards and Puniſhments, ſhou'd operate as powerfully and *univerſally* on the minds of Men, as *juſt* Notions of the *Deity*, together with a *full Aſſurance* of *another Life*. Now, If this reaſoning be juſt, Human Nature muſt have been, in ſome degree, *mended*, by the coming in of the *Goſpel*. And whoever is *well verſ'd in Church Hiſtory* (contrary to our Author's Aſſertion) will ſee this *Truth* illuſtrated by *Fact* in the *Exemplary Lives* of the *Firſt Chriſtans* in general. Nor were the good Effects of the *Goſpel* confin'd to the *early Ages* of the *Church*. Wherever it has been ſince propagated, it has carry'd its influence along with it, tho' perhaps not in ſo eminent a degree: in proof of which we need only compare thoſe Countries, where the *Chriſtian Religion* at preſent flouriſhes, with thoſe ſtill under the *darkneſs* of *Pagan* Error, and Superſtition; and, if it

it appears, that the *Sentiments* and *Manners* of men are infinitely more *rational* in the former, than in the latter, we ſhall have a *demonſtration* againſt our *Author*, and a full proof, that the *Chriſtian Religion*, tho' perhaps its *ſucceſs* may not have born a juſt porportion to its *excellence*, is yet far from being wholly *Ineffectual*, and has actually had a conſiderable influence towards reforming mankind.

Theſe are the moſt *material* Objections, which this Author has *occaſionally* urg'd againſt the *credit* and *Authority* of the *Chriſtian Revelation* — Its *Partiality*, and want of *Effect* —— I go on, in the laſt place, to conſider his Treatment of the *Scripture*, thoſe *Sacred Writings*, in which this *Revelation* is contain'd —— And here, as it is not my deſign to enter upon a *compleat Vindication* of *Scripture* from the many and groundleſs *Cavils* of this Author, I ſhall ſelect but a *Few* of the more remarkable Inſtances of this kind, and leave the Reader to judge of the reſt from this *Specimen.*

Among the numerous Objections of this Author to the *Hiſtory* of the *Old Teſtament*, That, which gives him moſt offence, is The Account of the *Jews extripating*

tirpating the Canaanites. "This ſtory "(he ſays) has given great advantage to "the Enemies of our Religon, who re- "preſent the whole as an unparallel'd "piece of Injuſtice and Cruelty." —— And the Injuſtice and Cruelty of it (it ſeems) conſiſts in the *Iſraelites* "invading, and "that too without any declaration of "War, the *Canaanites*, a free and in- "dependent Nation, and againſt whom "They had not the leaſt cauſe of com- "plaint, and, on pretence of their be- "ing Idolaters, deſtroying not only the "Men and the Women, but Infants in- "capable of Idolatry, or any other "crime." *(vid. p.* 271, 272, *&c.)*

It will be in vain to plead, that the *Jews*, in this whole tranſaction, acted by the expreſs *command* of *God.* Our Author has enter'd his *Caveat* againſt this *Plea*, by aſſuring us, that "Such a "command is pleaded in vain, unleſs "it can be ſhewn, that the Thing com- "manded is not inconſiſtent with the "Law of Nature; which if God can "diſpenſe with in one caſe, he may in "all; nor cou'd his wiſdom, then, pre- "ſcribe any certain Rule of Conduct "either for himſelf or his Creatures; "but all wou'd depend on an un- "certain, arbitrary, fluctuating, Will."

Nay

Nay he aſſerts, that "No man can be "as certain he had any ſuch Poſitive "Command from God, as he muſt be "that God had forbid it him by the "Light of Nature."

This is, indeed, a heavy charge againſt the *Scriptures* of the *Old Teſtament*, as it accuſes them of *counterfeiting* the *ſeal* of *Heaven*, and Stamping the *Authority* of *God* himſelf upon the *vileſt Action* any People cou'd be guilty of.——Let us try, then, if we cannot clear the *ſtory*, now before us, from this Imputation of a *Religious Forgery*; by ſhewing, that it is very conſiſtent to ſuppoſe *God* might iſſue out ſuch a *command*, and conſequently highly proper the *Jews* ſhou'd obey it. And

In order to ſhew this, I obſerve, that the *Nature* of All *Actions* whatever is abſolutely determin'd by their *Tendency*; and that they are *really Good* or *Bad*, as the *Conſequences*, which *do*, or *may*, flow from them, are of one or 'tother kind. For what is it, that conſtitutes the nature of *Right* and *Wrong*, with regard to *Human Actions*, but their *Propriety* or *Impropriety* to produce the *General Happineſs* of *Mankind?*——In the next place, do not *Circumſtances* greatly vary the nature of *Actions*, and ren-

der

der *That*, at *one time*, *fit* and *proper* to be done, which, at *another time*, and under *other circumſtances*, wou'd be the *contrary*? —— Let me, therefore, aſk this Author, whether an *Action*, which, to the *ſhort-ſighted* view of *Human Underſtanding*, which is incapable of diſcovering its *Whole Tendency*, Shall appear *improper* to be done, may not to the ſupream *Creator* of all things, who ſees its *remoteſt conſequences*, appear, *upon the whole*, highly *proper* to be done; and *vice verſâ*: whence it will evidently follow, (as much a *Paradox* as it may ſeem to this Author) that *God* may, conſiſtently with the nature of *Right* and *Wrong*, *command* the performance of an *Action*, which, to *Human Prudence*, excluſive of the *divine command*, cou'd not but have appear'd to be A *Wrong Action*.

To apply this to the preſent caſe, The *diſpoſſeſſing* of the *Canaanites*, and ſettling the *Jews* in their country, muſt, ſetting aſide *Revelation*, have appear'd to *Human Prudence* an *unjuſt* Procedure; and for this reaſon, becauſe it was depriving the former of their undoubted *Property*, and beſtowing it on the latter, who cou'd have no *Natural Right* and *Title* to what the *Canaanites*

were actually in poſſeſſion of. But might not this *Action* appear to the *Supream Being*, in a very *different Light?* —— Suppoſe the *Canaanites* to have been a very *wicked* and *Idolatrous* People: the Loſs of their *Lives*, and the *Extirpation* of their *whole Race*, might be a *proper Puniſhment* on them for their *Wickedneſs*, and *Idolatry.* —— Here then will be *One good Reaſon*, why this *Nation* might juſtly be treated in this ſeemingly barbarous and inhuman Manner. —— Suppoſe farther, that the *OEconomy* of *Providence*, in preparing the world for the future reception of the *Goſpel*, might require, that the *Jews*, whom he had ſelected from the reſt of mankind to preſerve the *true worſhip* of *Himſelf*, ſhou'd be ſituated in the Land of *Canaan*; Here will be *another Reaſon* for diſpoſſeſſing the *Canaanites*, whoſe *private Good* cou'd not, conſiſtently with the *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* of God, be prefer'd to the *General Good* of *Mankind.* The *Firſt* of theſe Reaſons is expreſsly *reveal'd* in *Scripture*; and the *Jews* are repeatedly aſſur'd, that it was not any *Merit* of their own, but the *Iniquities* of the *Canaanites*, that were the cauſe of their *Expulſion.* The latter may be ſtrongly

ſtrongly infer'd from the whole Series of the *Jewiſh Hiſtory*.

Thus far, then, I think we are clear, as to the *Propriety* of the *meer Action* (the *Dipoſſeſſing* of the *Canaanites)* Stript of all its *circumſtances*, and *manner* of being perform'd.—— The only remaining Difficulty is concerning The *Method*, in which this Event was brought about, and the *Actors* concern'd in it. To theſe our Author can by no means be reconcil'd. The *Extirpation* of a *Whole People*, even *Thoſe*, who cou'd not *deſerve* it, and that too by the Hands of *another People*, whom they had never *injur'd*, ſeems to Him ſo ſhocking a procedure, that He cannot help joining with the *Enemies of our Religion* in repreſenting the whole Tranſaction as an *unparallel'd piece of Cruelty and Injuſtice*.

There are *Two* Things in the *Hiſtory* of this *Event*, which give him moſt offence; The *Extirpation* of the *Whole People*, even *Infants*, who cou'd not partake in the *Guilt* of their *Parents*; And The Effecting this by the Hands of the *Jews*, without *Provocation*, or *Injury* receiv'd on their part.

As to the Firſt, I obſerve, that In *National Calamities* it is unreaſon-

able to expect, that God ſhou'd *miraculouſly* interpoſe in directing it to fall only on the *Guilty* Head. Where *Plague* or *Famine* afflict a People, The *Good* and the *Bad* are alike involv'd in the *general Calamity*; and I believe no reaſonable Man ever objected to Providence on that account —— But, farther, it ought to be conſider'd, that what was a *Puniſhment* to the *Idolatrous Parent*, was, in reality, a *Bleſſing* to the *yet Innocent Child*, in preventing, by death, that *ſtate* of *Impiety*, into which the Prejudice of *Education*, and a *vicious Example*, might otherwiſe have plung'd it. —— But a *Future State* ſets this matter quite clear; ſince it can be no *Injury* to a Creature, to be depriv'd of a *Short*, and perhaps a *miſerable*, Life, and be recompenc'd for the Loſs with an infinitely *Happy*, and *Immortal* Exiſtence.

But why muſt the *Jews* be the *Actors* in this *Tragedy*; a People whom the *Canaanites* had never injur'd? —— "God "has a thouſand ways —— of puniſh- "ing wicked Nations —— without com- "manding Men to do any thing con- "trary to the Laws of Nature." —— *Plague*, or *Famine*, wou'd have executed the *divine vengeance* as effectually, and ſav'd

ſav'd the *Jews* the *Guilt* of ſo *unlawful* an *Invaſion.*

I reply, that the *Jews* were nothing more than *Inſtruments* in the Hands of Providence in this whole Tranſaction. God had determin'd to puniſh this People by an Utter Extirpation; and ſurely He was at Liberty to make uſe of what *Means* he thought *fit.* No! you will ſay —— not ſuch *means* as break in upon the *Laws* of *Nature.* But let me aſk you, Why is it *unlawful* for one Nation to *invade* another, without *Provocation,* or *Injury* receiv'd? You muſt anſwer, Becauſe the *People invaded* will thereby *ſuffer* in their *Lives* and *Properties,* to which they have as good a natural *Right,* as the *Invaders* themſelves have to their own Lives and Properties. But this is not the Caſe at preſent. The *Canaanites,* before the *Jewiſh Invaſion,* had *forfeited,* by *Guilt,* their Lives and Properties to *God,* and the *Jews* were only *Inſtrumental* in inflicting that *Puniſhment* upon them, which *God* had *before* determin'd they ſhou'd undergo. The *Equity* of this Procedure may be illuſtrated by a familiar Caſe. It is in general contrary to the *Law* of *Nature,* that One Man ſhou'd take away the Life of another: yet,

yet, if I *forfeit* my Life to the *Society*, The *Executioner*, who takes it, does not offend againſt the Law of Nature.—— The *Jews* were but *Executioners* of the *divine Vengeance* on a *Wicked* and *Idolatrous* Generation.

But there is another Objection againſt the *Jews* being concern'd in this tranſaction. They were "the moſt improper people to convince the world, that "they did not act out of a private Intereſt, but purely to execute God's "Vengeance on an Idolatrous Nation." —For, "Wou'd God, in ſuch a caſe, "chooſe a people as prone to Idolatry, as the *Canaanites* themſelves?" ——I anſwer, They were, Upon that very account, the more *fit* to be employ'd in puniſhing the *Canaanites*; ſince the ſight and remembrance of ſuch a *ſignal* Act of *divine vengeance* on an *Idolatrous* Nation, was a proper *preſervative* to *themſelves* againſt relapſing into the *ſame Crime.*

But we are not to come off ſo eaſily: There is ſtill a notable Argument behind, to prove that the *Iſraelites* had no *right* to invade the *Canaanites*; and that is, "becauſe the *Canaanites* had a "*right* to *defend* themſelves;" which, according to our Author, is "ſuppoſing "two

" two oppoſite rights at the ſame time, " a right in the *Jews*, by *Revelation*, " to take away the Lives of the *Cana-* " *anites*, and a right in the *Canaanites*, " by the *Law of Nature*, to defend " their Lives." —— To which I anſwer, that the *Jews* had juſt *ſuch* a *right* to take away the Lives of the *Canaanites*, as an *Executioner*, authoriz'd by any Government, has to take away the Life of a *Malefactor*, who has *forfeited* it by *ſentence* of the *Law*; And the *Canaanites* had juſt *ſuch* a *right* of *defending* their Lives, as a *condemn'd Criminal* has to eſcape, if he can, from the Hand of Juſtice.

What has been advanc'd is, I hope, ſufficient to vindicate the Conduct of the *Jews* in driving out the *Canaanites*, and to ſhew, that they did nothing, in this whole tranſaction, *inconſiſtent with the Law of Nature*. Nor will it *avail* our Author to plead, that " No Man " can be as certain he had any ſuch " Poſitive Command from God, as he " muſt be that God had forbid it him " by the Light of Nature." —— For by What authority will you aſſert, that God cannot afford men *equal degrees of Evidence*, in whatever manner he thinks proper to *reveal* his *will*, whether by the

the Light of Nature, or immediate *Revelation?*

This Objection, you ſee, lies againſt the *Credit* of the *Sacred ſtory* of the *Old Teſtament*. Let us go on to examine whether the *Scriptures* of the *New* have met with a more favourable reception at this Gentleman's Hands. And here I ſhall ſelect the *Two* following *Objections*.

The Firſt lies againſt the *Parabolical ſtyle* of the *Goſpel*, and the *ſeeming Reaſon* aſſign'd for it by our *Saviour* himſelf. " Is not (ſays this Author) " the New Teſtament full of Parables; " nay is it not ſaid, that *without a Pa-* " *rable Jeſus ſpake not to the multitude*; " and for this *remarkable Reaſon, that* " *ſeeing they might ſee and not perceive,* " *and hearing they might hear and not* " *underſtand*; *leſt at any time they ſhou'd* " *be converted, and their ſins ſhou'd be* " *forgiven them*—?" (p. 332.) Where He wou'd perſuade us, that the true reaſon why *Jeſus* made uſe of Parables, was, by his own confeſſion, that his *Doctrine* might *not* be *underſtood*.

If this Gentleman had carefully conſider'd the Paſſage of *Scripture*, upon which he founds this Objection, he muſt have ſeen his miſtake. We read

(*Mark*

(*Mark.* 4. 11, 12.) *And he ſaid unto them, Unto* you *it is given to know the myſtery of the Kingdom of God; but unto* them that are without *all theſe things are done in parables*; That *ſeeing they may ſee and not perceive*, &c. —— And, at the 34th *verſe*, —— *without a parable ſpake he not unto them: and, when they were alone, he expounded all things to his Diſciples.* —— Here are evidently *two* ſorts of perſons, to whom our Saviour's Doctrine was deliver'd, *Them, that* were *without*, and his *Diſciples.* To the former he addreſs'd himſelf in *parables*, but *expounded all things* to the latter. By the deſcription *Them that are without*, Our Lord undoubtedly meant the *Generality of his Auditors*, who were greatly prejudic'd againſt his doctrine, and theſe, he cou'd not but foreknow, wou'd have rejected it, tho' ever ſo plainly and intelligibly deliver'd. —— *Grotius*, accordingly, upon the place interprets τοῖς ἔξω *(them that are without) Illis, qui audiebant quidem Chriſtum, ſed not diſcendæ pietatis animo* —— It was therefore *equal* to ſuch people, whether our Saviour's Doctrines were deliver'd in *parables*, or not. They had no right to a *full Inſtruction* in *the myſteries of the Kingdom of God*, as not being

being diſpos'd to receive and embrace them. And therefore the Expreſſion immediately following, ἵνας βλέποντες, &c. *that ſeeing they may ſee, and not perceive,* &c. carries indeed the reaſon of our *Saviour*'s conduct towards them, but a reaſon founded in themſelves, in their own *obſtinate* diſpoſition and *hardneſs of Heart.* Nor is this conſtruction unuſual with the *Penmen* of the *New Teſtament,* as may be ſhewn from many parallel expreſſions, particularly *Mat.* 23. 34, 35. *Wherefore behold I ſend unto you Prophets and Wiſe Men, and ſome of them ye ſhall kill, and crucify, and ſome of them ſhall ye ſcourge in your ſynagogues, and perſecute them from city to city*; That *upon you may come* (ὅπως ἐφ ὑμᾶς ἔλθη) *all the righteous Blood ſpilt upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias ſon of Barachias, whom ye ſlew between the Temple and the Altar.* Where it cannot be meant, that our Saviour wou'd ſend *Prophets* and *wiſe Men* to them only with a view of drawing down the divine vengeance upon them. No! It only declares the *Event* or *Conſequence* of their treating them in the manner deſcrib'd.

The

The other Objection is, that *the Scriptural and Philoſophical Account of Natural Things* ſeldom agrees; as an Inſtance of which he tells us, (*p.* 209.) "There is ſcarce a Country-Man ſo "ignorant, as not to know, that, if the "Seed, thrown into the Earth, is kill'd "by drought, or dies by any other Ac-"cident, it never riſes; but St. *Paul* "ſays *Thou Fool, that which thou ſoweſt* "*is not quicken'd, except it die.* (1 Cor. "15. 36.)——And our Saviour him-"ſelf ſays, *Except a corn of wheat fall* "*into the ground, and die, it abideth* "*alone*; *but if it die, it bringeth forth* "*much fruit.*" (Joh. 12, 24.)——Haſt thou appeal'd unto the *Country-man*, Sir —? Unto the *Country-man* Thou ſhalt go. He will tell you, that the *External* Part, or *Outward Coat*, of the *Seed* muſt *rot*, before the *ſeed* can ſpring up, and bring forth *fruit*. This was always ſo well known a piece of *Natural Philoſophy*, that St. *Paul* might very well expreſs the *Whole* for the *Part*, without any danger of being miſunderſtood.—— When A Friend or Neighbour is buried, Do we not ſay, *The Man is dead*, tho' but a *Part* of the *Human Compoſition* rots in the *Grave*. And this ſuggeſts to us the *propriety*

and *elegance* of the *ſimilitude*. For as the *Shell* or *Coat* of the *Seed dies* before it is *quicken'd*, ſo the *Body* muſt ſuffer *death*, before the *Whole Man riſes* to *Immortal Life*.

To theſe Objections I ſhall only add this Author's *Novel Hypotheſis* concerning the Extent of *Chriſt's commiſſion*, which he has thought fit to limit, and confine to but a *Part* of *Mankind*. His Proof of it is admirable. " *Jeſus* " (he tells us) does not ſay, he was ſent " to *all Iſrael*, but *to the loſt Sheep of* " *the Houſe of Iſrael*. And his Parable " about the *loſt Sheep* plainly ſuppos'd " *All* were not loſt. And when it was " objected to him, that he kept com- " pany with *ſinners*, he owns the Charge, " and ſays, *The whole need not a Phy-* " *ſician but They that are Sick*; which " wou'd have been an improper an- " ſwer, if he thought that all ſtood in " need of *him and his Spiritual Phyſick*. " And, to confirm this he adds, *I am* " *not come to call the Righteous, but Sin-* " *ners to repentance*. Which is dividing " mankind into two parts, The *Whole* " or *Righteous*, and The *Sick* or *Sin-* " *ners*; and that his buſineſs was whol- " ly with the latter." —— And he adds, " The not obſerving this diſtinction has " been

" been the cauſe of many groſs and " uncharitable miſtakes; and 'tis ſome- " what ſtrange, that *Jeſus*, who beſt " knew how far his commiſſion extend- " ed, ſhou'd not be credited in this " matter." *(p.* 48.)

I confeſs my ſelf wholly unacquainted with this Gentleman's private Character, but think he can have no reaſon to be angry, if I take it for granted, that an Author, who has ſuch high notions of *Morality*, is himſelf a Good *Moral* Man. If ſo, does it not follow from his own *Hypotheſis*, that *Chriſt*'s *Commiſſion* extends not to *Him.* His *Moral* Qualifications, to be ſure, rank him in the *firſt Claſs* or Diviſion of Mankind, The *Whole* or *Righteous*—— one of the *Happy Few*, the *virtuous Minority*, who enjoy ſo perfect a *Health* of *Innocence* and *Goodneſs*, as to ſtand in no need of the *Spiritual Phyſick* of the *Goſpel.*——And therefore upon his own Principles, he is unavoidably reduc'd to this *dilemma*, either to quit the Title of A *Chriſtian*, or That of A *Moral* Man.——Which of the Two he will chuſe, is no difficult matter to gueſs.—— Beſides, That *ſneering*, *contemptuous*, Expreſſion——*Him and his Spiritual Phyſick*—— is a broad Inſinuation,

ation, that, whatever might be the general *Diſeaſe* of Human Nature, the *Remedy*, adminiſtred by the *Goſpel*, is, in his opinion, at beſt but a *Quack Medicine*.

It were almoſt trifling to ſpend any time in vindicating our *Saviour*'s words from the falſe *Gloſs* here put upon them. Every one muſt ſee, that *Jeſus* intended to declare, that *he came not to call a Righteous, but a Sinful*, WORLD to *Repentance*; ſuppoſing (as St. *Paul* himſelf underſtands the doctrine, *Rom.* 5. 12.) that *All had ſinned*. All Mankind, in a *greater* or *leſs degree*, partook of the *contagion* of *ſin*; and conſequently *All* ſtood in need, *more* or *leſs*, of the *Salutary Influence* of the GOSPEL.

The Reader will obſerve, that Theſe Objections to the *Goſpel Revelation* are chiefly taken from this Author's 14th *Chapter*, in which he ſets himſelf to confute the late Dr. *Clarke*'s excellent *Diſcourſe* of The Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Chriſtian Revelation; *and to ſhew from thence, how inconſiſtent ſoever with the deſign of that diſcourſe, that nothing can be a part of*

of Religion, but what is founded on the nature and Reaſon of Things. (p. 353.) In order to which he charges the *Doctor* with *Inconſiſtency*, in firſt deſcribing the *Religion of Nature* as abſolutely *perfect*, and its Precepts *Plain* and *intelligible* to *all Men*, and afterwards giving up this *Hypotheſis*, and repreſenting it as *obſcure*, and *defective*.—— The Charge runs thus. "Who cou'd expect, after "we had been told, that, as God go- "verns all his own actions by the Eter- "nal Rule of Reaſon, ſo all his ratio- "nal Creatures are oblig'd to govern "themſelves in all theirs by the ſame "Eternal Rule: A Rule too, own'd to "be ſo plain, that *the Reaſon of all "men naturally and neceſſarily aſſent to "it:* Who, I ſay, after theſe, and a "number of other ſuch Expreſſions, "cou'd imagine that all this ſhou'd be "unſaid, and the utmoſt Art employ'd "to ſhew the Imperfection, Inſuffici- "ency, Obſcurity, and Uncertainty, of "the Light of Nature; and that, by "reaſon of its many defects, all man- "kind were in an unavoidable State of "corruption?" (*p.* 419.)

It muſt be own'd theſe *two* Accounts of *Natural Religion* are very *inconſiſtent* with each other; but then the *Incon-*

Inconſiſtency lies, not in the *Doctor's Scheme*, but in this Gentleman's Repreſentation of it. —— Dr. *Clarke*, after having, with great clearneſs, and Strength of Reaſon, demonſtrated, that From the *Eternal* and *neceſſary differences* of *Things* there naturally and neceſſarily ariſe certain *moral Obligations*, which are *of themſelves* incumbent on all *rational Creatures* —— that the ſame *Eternal Obligations* are *moreover* the expreſs *Will*, and *Command*, of God —— and that *theſe things are ſo notoriouſly plain and ſelf-evident, that nothing but the extreameſt ſtupidity of mind, corruption of manners, or perverſeneſs of Spirit can poſſibly make any man entertain the leaſt doubt of them.* * —— goes on to ſhew, that *Though the Neceſſity and Indiſpenſableneſs of all the great and moral obligations of Natural Religion, and alſo the certainty of a future ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments, be in general, deducible, even demonſtrably, by a chain of clear and undeniable reaſoning; yet (in the preſent ſtate of the world, by what means ſoever it came originally to be ſo corrupted —) ſuch is the* Careleſſneſs, Inconſiderateneſs, *and* want of Attention, *of the greater part of mankind; ſo many the* Prejudices, *and*

* *Evid.* p. 177.

falſe

falſe Notions *taken up by* evil Education; *ſo ſtrong and violent the unreaſonable* Luſts, Appetites, *and* Deſires of Senſe; *and ſo great the* Blindneſs, *introduc'd by* ſuperſtitious opinions, vicious cuſtoms, *and* debauched practices, *thro' the world; that very few are able in reality and effect to diſcover theſe things clearly for themſelves; but men have great need of particular* Teaching *and much* Inſtruction, *to convince them of the* Truth, *and* Certainty, *and* Importance *of theſe things; to give them a due* Senſe *and clear and juſt* Apprehenſions *concerning them, and to bring them effectually to the* Practice *of the plaineſt and moſt neceſſary Duties.* *

Now Can any Thing be *plainer* than that this Excellent Writer's charge of *Imperfection*, and *Uncertainty*, does not lie againſt the *Light of Nature*, but the *Powers* of *Human Reaſon* in its corrupt, *degenerate*, State? —— Does not Dr. *Clarke* ſuppoſe, that *the moral Obligations of Natural Religion are deducible, even demonſtrably, by a Chain of clear and undeniable Reaſoning?* —— Does he not charge *Mankind* with *Careleſſ-*

* Prop. v. *where the* Reader *may ſee theſe Particulars deduc'd at large.*

neſs, *Inconſiderateneſs*, and *want of Attention*; with *Prejudices*, and *falſe Opinions*, taken up by *Evil Education*? —— And does he not aſſign this very *Degeneracy* as a reaſon, why *Few are able in reality and effect to diſcover theſe things clearly for themſelves*? —— And will you ſtill ſay This is charging the *Light of Nature* with being *Defective*? —— If our Author *does not*, or *will not*, ſee the *conſiſtency* of all this, I cannot help it. However, to aſſiſt his Apprehenſion a little, let us conſider a *Parallel* caſe. Suppoſe a *Race* of *People*, whoſe Faculty of *Sight*, thro' ſome *general cauſe*, has been *impair'd*, and render'd very *defective*. Wou'd you ſay, that to charge this people with *blindneſs*, and with *ſtumbling* even at *Noonday*, was to call in queſtion the *Light* of the *Sun*? —— What the *Sun*'s *Light* wou'd be to theſe people, *That* The *Light* of *Nature* is to *Mankind* in its *degenerate* condition. And the *Doctor*'s ſuppoſing *Human Reaſon* in this caſe not to be a *Sufficient Guide*, is no more an objection to the *Evidence* and *Perſpicuity* of *Natural Religion*, than the ſuppoſing this People's *Sight Defective*, and *Inſufficient*, wou'd be an Argument

that

that the *Sun* did not *Shine* upon them at *Noon-day.*

Thus much I thought proper to alledge in vindication of the late Dr. *Clarke*'s *Evidences of Natural and Reveal'd Religion* againſt this Gentleman's Charge of *Inconſiſtency* * — He owns *the Doctor got immortal Honour by that Diſcourſe*: (*p.* 353.) but, if His cenſure of it be juſt, this will paſs for no great compliment to the underſtanding, and judgment, of the Generality of the *Doctor*'s *Readers.* —— And here I take leave of this Gentleman, and his elaborate Work, not in the leaſt ſurpriz'd, that an *Author*, who endeavours to overthrow the *Credit* and *Authority* of the *Chriſtian Revelation itſelf*, ſhou'd take ſome pains to decry one of the moſt *judicious*, and moſt *rational*, *Defences* of It, that has perhaps ever appear'd. But

——— *omnis*
Effuſus labor.

* *If the Reader wou'd ſee a full and compleat vindication of the* Doctor, *let him conſult a very Able Writer's late* Defence *of* Dr. Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Reveal'd Religion.

This Writer's Attempt is Vain. For, Whilſt the *Chriſtian Religion* holds its Eſteem in the *Sentiments* and *practice* of the *wiſeſt*, the moſt *Learned*, and moſt *Moral*, Men, ſo long will Dr. *Clarke*'s *Book* be read with the utmoſt *pleaſure*, as well as *profit*, and the higheſt Reverence be paid by all *true Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity* to the memory of Its *Learned* and *Ingenious Apologiſt*.

F I N I S.